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ABSTRACT

The Living Stage Improvisational Theatre Demonstration Project (Washington, D.C.) conducts weekly workshops to enhance the creative expression and self esteem of orthopedically handicapped children, aged 4 to 8 years. The Living Stage program is designed to demonstrate that methods of improvisational theatre can have a positive impact on parental attitudes. Services to teachers and auxiliary staff are intended to have an impact on classroom teaching methods. Other components of the project are staff development, use of handicapped artists, dissemination and replication activities, and coordination with other agencies. A log lists activities of the demonstration project for the fiscal year 1980-1981. The goals of the project (enhancement of children's creative expression and self esteem) are approached through the interaction of the actors with each child in an intensive 2- to 3-hour session involving music, dramatics, dramatic play, and many nonverbal body movements and expressions. Among results of the project were an increase in the repertoire of communication skills of the handicapped children who could not communicate orally and increased parental displays of love. Although attempts to evaluate the program through paper and pencil tests and observational scales are reported to have been unsuccessful, the panel review strategy supported the effectiveness of the Living Stage in contributing to the lives of the handicapped children on a broad set of dimensions. Other evaluation measures mentioned are case studies, time series analyses, and parent reports. Copies of the 1980-1981 evaluations for Fairhill Elementary School (Fairfax, Virginia) and Sharpe Health School (Washington, D.C.) are included. Appended are letters and press releases. (SW)

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THE LIVING STAGE IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOR ORTHOPEDICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN, AGES 4 - 8.

OVERVIEW 1978 - 1981

Submitted by:
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1978-1981

LIVING STAGE IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOR ORTHOPEDICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN, AGES 4-8.

I. OVERVIEW

The Living Stage Improvisational Theatre Demonstration Project has completed its third and final year of demonstration. All planning/administrative objectives necessary for implementation of the program in its final year were accomplished as in previous years. These include: contact with Fairfax County and District of Columbia Departments of Special Education, including the directors, supervising area coordinators, principals, teachers, and therapists; establishments of population, including handicapping conditions and ages of participating children; contact with parents; training of acting/teaching staff; preparation of equipment; and operation of workshops for children[1]

For the duration of the three year project, the Living Stage Theatre Company conducted weekly workshops for orthopedically handicapped children, ages 4-8, at two school sites: Fairhill Center School in Fairfax, Virginia, and Sharpe Health School in Washington, D.C. The workshop calendar began in mid-November (following the two-month training period for the acting/teaching staff), and ended in late May.

Services to Children: Over the course of three years, an average of thirty orthopedically handicapped children participated in the project each year. Twenty-two of these children were participants for two consecutive years. Three children at Fairhill Center School were participants for three consecutive years as they had been involved in the trial demonstration project in 1977-78. By the third year of the project, many of the children were over the age limit set by the grant; some had been mainstreamed into regular classroom settings; others had moved elsewhere. Thus, in the final year, the program served two new groups of children (ages 4-7) with the exception of four children who had been in the program the previous year.

An ongoing program objective was to serve as many of the same children as possible for the duration of the project. The main impetus behind this was to provide an opportunity to effect long-term impact. That the program did have tremendous impact on the children was, and still is, being corroborated by both school staff and parents alike. The most apparent gains to the children and the ones that the project had initially set as specific goals were in the areas of self-concept,[2] verbal and non-verbal communication, and peer interaction skills.

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[1] Accompanying this report is a detailed day-to-day log including a listing of program objectives accomplished. The log covers activities from July 1, 1980-June 30, 1981.

[2] See: Evaluation section for discussion of evaluation design and outcomes.

There were numerous examples cited as significant "breakthroughs;" cases of shy, non-communicative children blossoming into laughing, confident, expressive participants; cases of non-verbal children discovering alternative and effective modes of communication through sound and movement. Each week, for two and a half hours, the Living Stage company created an environment of trust, warmth, and acceptance -- an environment where each child could explore his/her capacity for creative expression without fear of failure. Through continuous opportunities to participate in a decision-making process the children gained confidence in themselves and in their ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings. They discovered, with increasing excitement, that they were not limited by their handicap.

The impact on self-concept, though difficult to measure, was the most immediate and the most visible. Parents and teachers alike often gave feedback to the project staff. Comments such as "It makes everything else work better," or "She's showing more initiative in her regular classroom," were not uncommon. These observations, along with countless others, were indicative that perhaps an even greater impact had occured on a deeper level -- that is that these children began to view themselves as persons who are able to "assist" rather than as persons who must always be "assisted." If this is so, then undoubtedly, it will have a significant impact on their ability to develop positive relationships in life.

Parent Involvement: The Living Stage program was structured so that parent involvement included frequent on-site observation of workshops, on-going consultations with the project coordinator regarding child progress and program goals, home visits conducted by project coordinator, and three informal meetings a year with project staff to share anecdotes and discuss objectives and techniques of the Living Stage program. Parents were also encouraged to take training workshops with the project staff should they wish to. Some parents expressed a genuine interest in acquiring new parenting skills, such as the ability to enter into a play situation with their child. However, they were unable to find sufficient time to participate in such a workshop. Over a three year period, approximately 185 parents were contacted and oriented to the Living Stage program. Forty-seven of them were involved with the project for two consecutive years, five of them for three.

The major goal of the parent componetn was to demonstrate that methods of improvisational theatre have a positive impact on parental attitudes toward their child and his/her capabilities.[3] It is certain that this goal was largely achieved with the Fairhill parents. This is due, in part, to the fact that these parents came weekly to pick their children up after the program and could, if they chose to, consistently observe their children in the workshops. It was a distinct advantage to the project that Fairhill School had observation booths adjoining several of the classrooms. It was also an unexpected advantage that the Living Stage workshops were scheduled as an after-school program so that parents were obliged to pick their children up. Thus, these parents were able to witness first-hand the obvious growth in their child's awareness of and pride in his/her own capability for creative expression as well as an increased ability to communicate in a variety of creative ways. Parents were frequently heard to say "I never knew she could do that!" or "I never knew he had such a vivid imagination!"

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[3] See: Evaluation for results of parent attitudinal scale ('81).

Parent involvement at Sharpe Health School presented a striking contrast to Fairhill. With the exception of the first-year parent orientation (to which six parents came) and, in the second year, a presentation at a PTA meeting, the company virtually had no contact with these parents. A continuous effort was made by the project coordinator, via phone calls and letters and other strategies, to involve these parents to some degree, but to little avail.

The problems were simple. The Sharpe Health program took place in the morning. The majority of the parents worked during those hours and could not afford to take time off from their jobs to observe the workshops in session. Transportation was another problem: for several parents there was none. Scheduling parent meetings in the evening proved to be impractical -- single parents could not afford a babysitter; others again had no means of getting to the school. In a few cases, phone contact was futile for some phones would frequently be disconnected. There were three children who were institutionalized with no visible parents. Home visits proved to be extremely difficult to schedule for obvious reasons -- during the day parents were working; at night, the inner-city neighborhoods were felt to be unsafe for the project coordinator to travel in alone.[4]

Once these obstacles became apparent, contact by phone proved to be the most successful means of communicating with parents and orienting them to the program. Occasionally, there would be proud and pleased feedback exchanged over the phone, particularly following a newspaper article or television coverage on the project at Sharpe Health. It is important to note, too, that each parent signed the permission forms necessary for their child's participation. In addition, the project staff was always able to obtain permission, when necessary, to videotape, film, and take photographs, which in several cases, was a clear indication of parental support of the program.

An aspect of the program that appeared to have a strong impact on many of the parents at both schools was the inclusion of handicapped artists in the Living Stage workshops. Parents were pleased that their children had an opportunity to meet and interact with adult role models who are handicapped and self-sufficient. (See Handicapped Artists for further details).

A particularly gratifying indication that the Living Stage program impacted on parental attitudes toward methods of improvisational theatre was the spontaneous formation of a parent advocacy group. Upon hearing that funds would cease after July, 1981, five Fairhill parents expressed a willingness to look for potentail funding sources, and to act as advocates for the Living Stage program. These parents were willing to work in conjunction with the Living Stage staff to approach private foundations and corporations in Fairfax

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[4] Parent involvement is a continual problem for Sharpe Health staff for many of the same reasons listed above.

County for ongoing support of the work with orthopedically handicapped children. It is clear that these parents have a conviction about the value of the creative arts experience and are willing to act upon it so that their children may continue to benefit from that experience.

Services to Teacher and Auxiliary Staff: During the three year period, twelve teachers and eight therapists were closely involved with project. Teachers observed the workshops on a regular basis; therapists, as often as their schedules permitted. Orientation sessions were held at the beginning of each school year by both project staff and school staff. The Living Stage company would present a demonstration of their work to orient the teachers and supporting personnel. The therapists would, in turn, elaborate on specific handicapping conditions of the participating children and associated problems.

The goal for this target group was to demonstrate that the methods and techniques of improvisational theatre can have an impact on classroom teaching methods, as concerns both teaching attitudes and skills. Teachers were encouraged to participate in workshops with Living Stage staff to acquire new teaching skills. At the close of the second year of the project, three of the teachers expressed an earnest desire to receive training in the Living Stage techniques.[5] However, due to varying circumstances, these teachers were unable to do so. The other teachers, although appreciative of the program for the children, could not envision themselves participating in improvisational theatre exercises. Greatly influneced by their professional training (which emphasized the rational, cognitive approach to education, particularly handicapped children), these teachers admitedly found it difficult and, in some cases, threatening to shift their focus to a totally different approach to education --an approach that prizes the creative, intuitive, and affective dimensions above all else.

Regardless of the fact that the teachers did not acquire improvisational theatre techniques through inservice training, there is no doubt that the program impacted on teacher attitudes. Slowly but surely there emerged a new level of awareness and acceptance of these children's feelings and imaginative productions. Each teacher recognized and acknowledged the value of these children engaging in creative play. Some stated that they saw significant correlation between the Living Stage experience and the cognitive and social gains occuring in the children.

Evaluation sessions with project staff were scheduled three times a year and teachers and supporting personnel were encouraged to participate. These sessions served as a valuable means of keeping communication channels open between project staff and school staff. Observations were exchanged and feedback regarding the educational value and impact of the program from all school staff involved, including principals was positive and supportive.

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[5] See Year End Report, 1979-80, Evaluation, for documentation by panel review member, Dr. Nancy Carlsen, of teacher's interest in receiving training from Living Stage.

In addition, the project coordinator met with teachers and therapists individually at both project sites on an ongoing basis. Serving as liaison for the project, the project coordinator was available each week to address immediate questions and concerns that any staff member had. It is clear that the evaluation sessions, as well as the ongoing consultation with the project coordinator, helped to effect the successful integration of an artistic company into a school setting.

Staff Development: In-service training for the Living Stage staff was an ongoing process beginning with a two-month period of intensive daily rehearsals. Detailed planning went into every performance/workshop; planning which is analagous to the best in-classroom planning procedures. Each workshop was immediately followed by in-depth evaluation sessions led by the project director. These sessions included observations about individual children, as well as an intensive critique by the director on each staff member's work for that day. The sessions resulted in a typed report which then became available for study and review by all program staff.

In preparation for the workshops with orthopedically handicapped children, all members of the project staff participated in an in-depth seminar on handicapping conditions. Specific conditions of participating children were described and discussed in detail.

It is important to note that a significant strength inherent in the project at the outset was the vast prior experience and training of the artistic project director and the associate director, also leading actress. Together, they brought 25 years of experience working with children to the project. A major part of the last five years was spent working with handicapped children and adults. This experience and training largely accounts for the success of the BEH model project.

Handicapped Artists: At the outset, one of the expected outcomes of the project was that the program would furnish young, handicapped children models for action in society, and would further provide handicapped adult role models to reinforce these models for action.

There is no doubt that, in terms of impact on children, teachers, and parents alike, one of the most significant features of this project was the inclusion of handicapped artists in the Living Stage workshops. As described in a previous report (see year-end report, '79-80), two handicapped artists performed for and interacted with the children at both project sites during the second and third years of the project. One artist was a local professional weaver with cerebral palsy, the other a New York actor disabled by polio.[6]

It was clear from the enthusiastic response of the children --able-bodied and disabled--that none of them had had such close contact with a physically handicapped adult. They asked questions freely of the artists, many of them genuinely surprised to meet adults who were handicapped, were artists, and, above all, were self-sufficient. In addition to participating in the Living Stage workshops, the actor also performed for an entire school assembly at both Fairhill and Sharpe Health.

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[6] See: Appendix B for Washington Post article on site-visit of handicapped artist, Henry Holden.

The artists also met with the children's parents following the workshops at Fairhill School. (An attempt was made to arrange this at Sharpe Health as well, but parents were unable to attend). These meetings were well-attended and as questions were asked and answered, it became clear that the able-bodied adults, too, rarely have close contact with disabled adults. The parents said they felt encouraged and inspired by the artists' examples of courage and determination, and that they gained new insights into their children's thoughts and feelings. That this aspect of the Living Stage project was meaningful to the parents is reflected in the letters which follow this section.

A significant outcome of this component of the program was the emergence of a training model for handicapped artists to work with handicapped children, their parents and teachers in a school setting. In fact, for these particular artists, it was a first experience in working with handicapped children in a school setting. Actor Henry Holden, upon returning to New York, put together a model package to present to the local school systems with the hopes of providing able-bodied children and disabled children with a successful handicapped adult role model.

Dissemination and Replication: The Living Stage demonstration program attracted a high level of local and national interest. Consequently, a major portion of the project staff's time was allotted to the development, refinement, and execution of dissemination activities. These activities included television interviews, lecture/film presentations, workshops, residencies at a series of dissemination sites. In addition, both Associated Press and United Press International distributed stories on the project to national news media; and the project director, along with members of his staff, appeared in an hour-long, NBC-produced documentary film on the Living Stage/OSE project. Other significant activities included efforts to assist outreach activities, specifically those of regional theatre companies interested in adapting the Living Stage program. This list is long and during the course of the three years, activities continued to accelerate.[7]

Dissemination of information about the HCEEP project was a clear and straightforward task; however, to disseminate a model for training educators and artists to replicate or adapt the Living Stage program proved to be a more challenging task. A proposal to disseminate a document communicating the Living Stage treatment to the field of special education was considered but believed to be inadequate. A training tape was attempted by TADS, but also proved to be inadequate. The reason was simple: the Living Stage process could not be reproduced in print, "packaged," and mailed out along with a videotape, for the very reason that it is a process. The process is one of self-discovery and exploration of the individual's capacities for creative expression, a process that is unique to each individual and that activates through experience. The only way to learn improvisational theatre techniques is to experience them firsthand. Thus, the dissemination and replication plan for the final year was outlined in the following manner: the project director and project coordinator would conduct master workshops across the country to offer specialized training to special educators and theatre artists in the use of improvisational theatre techniques with physically disabled children.

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[7] See: Log of Activities for entries regarding specific dissemination activities in the final year of demonstration. See: Appendix B for articles. See: Year-End Report '79-80 for listing of outreach efforts to other theatre companies.

The project coordinator with assistance from the project director and director of development, established contact with special educators, professionals in the social services, and theatre artists in four cities to generate interest in the Living Stage program. In the second year the project director and project coordinator conducted "lecture/demonstrations" in Madison, Wisconsin; Boston, Massachusetts; San Francisco, California; and, Honolulu, Hawaii. The latter was added to the list of dissemination sites upon receiving an unexpected invitation from the Mental Health Association of Hawaii.[8]

The purpose of these meetings was two-fold: 1) to disseminate information about the model project and demonstrate some improvisational theatre techniques, and 2) to generate interest and commitment to participation in a master workshop in Living Stage techniques the following year.

Interest was generated at those presentations, and in the spring of the final year, the project director and project coordinator returned to Madison, Boston and Hawaii to conduct master workshops in the hopes of stimulating replication of the Living Stage model. A workshop was also conducted at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina upon request; however, arrangements for San Francisco never materialized.

Coordination with other Agencies: As a member of the D.C. Consortium of BEH funded projects for three years, Living Stage worked in conjunction with several agencies to function as an advocate for quality programs for handicapped infants and children in Washington, D.C. Some of the agencies included: D.C. Society for Crippled Children, National Children's Center, Howard University, United Planning Organization, D.C. Public School, National Child Day Care Association, and Information Center for Handicapped Individuals.

It is important to note that a significant outcome of such extensive contact with these agencies was not only a greatly increased awareness of existing services for handicapped children in the District, but also a clarification of the major issues and concerns with regard to services for handicapped children both in the District and nationally.

Each workshop included a wide sampling of educators, therapists, and artists. The average number of participants per workshop was twenty, with the exception of the Madison residency which included forty professionals. At the conclusion of each workshop, participants received a packet of relevant materials including a description of the Living Stage philosophy and goals and a bibliography of suggested readings.

These workshops were successful in inspiring several educators and artists to do this work in some fashion with physically disabled children. The workshops appeared to have the most impact on attitudes and approach to children and their education. This was evidenced by the testimonies of participants at the time and later through letters.[9]

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[8] See: Year-End Report, 1979-80, for detailed description of the dissemination presentation in each city.

[9] See Appendix A for letters and Appendix B for articles on the Hawaii, Boston and Wisconsin workshops.

LIVING STAGE IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOR ORTHOPEDICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN, AGES 4-8.

LOG OF ACTIVITIES

July 1st, 1980 - June 30th, 1981

Activity	Date
Project coordinator meets with project director to discuss and outline end-of-year report. Coordinator commences preparation of report.	July 1st, 1980
Project coordinator meets with consultant, Larry Shapiro, to discuss Living Stage's work and potential funding sources for '81-82.	July 2nd, 1980
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding end-of-year report.	July 3rd, 1980
D.C. Consortium meeting at Hospital for Sick Children. Agenda includes discussion of expanding memberships, report by consultants on ongoing consortium activities, potential of future funding from NCAH.	July 7th, 1980
Director of Development and project coordinator meet with NCAH Inservice Training Directors, Scott Stoner and Jamie Girsbey to discuss possible coordination of activities.	July 8th, 1980
Project coordinator contacts several Fairhill parents regarding their previously expressed interest in forming a parent advocacy group. Parents agree to form group.	July 9th-18th, 1980
Assistant Professor Eva Fletcher confirms arrangements for presentation on Living Stage HCEEP project at University of D.C. and D.C. public schools sponsored workshop. Date: July 21st.	July 9th, 1980
Project coordinator makes contact with Northern Virginia Training Center Director Bev Solomon regarding Center as potential site for Living Stage project in fall, '80. Site visit scheduled for July 28th.	July 11th, 1980
Project director and project coordinator meet with grant writer, Elizabeth Brunazzi, to discuss potential model program with deaf students at Gallaudet Model Secondary School for the Deaf.	July 11th, 1980

Activity	Date
Project coordinator contacts Gallaudet to obtain key names of staff who would support Living Stage model program at M.S.S.D. in '81-82.	July 14th, 1980
Project coordinator prepares follow-up letter to individuals in attendance at San Francisco, Boston and Madison dissemination meetings this past spring.	July 15th, 1980
Meeting with director of development and project director to discuss newly-formed parent advocacy group and the format it should take.	July 18th, 1980
Project coordinator gives lecture/film presentation on Living Stage BEH project to 25 teachers and professors at University of D.C. Presentation is first in the two week teacher workshop. Enthusiastic response. See: Appendix for letter of appreciation.	July 21st, 1980
Project coordinator visits Northern Virginia Training Center (in Fairfax County) and meets with Director Dr. Solomon to discuss possibility of working with residents for third year of HCEEP project. Population proves to be inappropriate in terms of meeting existing grant criteria.	July 21st, 1980
Staff meeting with project director to discuss fall activities.	July 22nd, 1980
Buffington Associates contacts Living Stage to discuss possibility of project director serving as consultant for BEH grant focussed on parent training and public awareness.	July 23rd, 1980
Dr. Larry Shapiro meets with project director, project coordinator and director of development to discuss proposal to Division of Personnel Preparation. Project director contracts Dr. Shapiro to write proposal (for '81-82). (This is completely independent of Consortium activities).	July 24th, 1980
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding end-of-year report.	July 25th, 1980

Activity	Date
Telephone consultation with D.C. Consortium President Elaine Vowels regarding current status of D.C. Consortium, i.e. project officer Carolyn Smith's offer to review and re-order Consortium objectives and to revise budget. Meeting to vote on new proposal set for July 31st.	July 28th, 1980
D.C. Consortium members meet with project officer at D.C. General Hospital to discuss Consortium proposal for '80-81. Discussion included further delineation of consortium goals and objectives; objectives are prioritized.	July 31st, 1980
Telephone consultation with Model Secondary School for the Deaf principal Bob Mobley regarding possibility of working with MSSD students in '81. Meeting set tentatively for September 2nd.	August 4th, 1980
Telephone contact with Jane Williams, Officer in Handicapped Model Program, regarding proposal to work with rubella teenagers at MSSD. Meeting tentatively set for early September.	August 8th, 1980
Project coordinator meets with Consortium president to discuss outcome of July 31st meeting regarding revised consortium budget.	August 12th, 1980
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding evaluation summary for year end report.	August 19th, 1980
Project coordinator contacts Fairfax County Special Education supervisor Bea Cameron regarding program continuation at Fairhill site in fall.	August 22nd, 1980
Project coordinator contacts Gallaudet MSSD principal to set meeting date to discuss Living Stage proposal for model program in '81-82. Referred to MSSD Drama instructor Tim McCartey as ideal contact to discuss potential program.	August 25th, 1980
Project coordinator proofs and reviews end-of-year report.	September 2nd, 1980
Meeting with assistant to director to discuss draft of final report.	September 5th, 1980
Telephone consultation with consultant Shapiro to discuss reserach for potential funding sources. Meeting with project director set for September 12th.	September 8th, 1980

Activity	Date
Meeting with project director to outline activities necessary for program implementation in the schools.	September 9, 1980
Director of Development, project director and project coordinator view film by Durrin, Inc. in search of filmmaker for hour-long documentary on all of Living Stage's work. (Funds for film given by Favrot Foundation).	September 10, 1980
Telephone consultation with TADS consultant Jim Cox regarding third year needs assessment, i.e. discussion of most appropriate procedure.	September 12, 1980
Project director meets with consultant Shapiro discuss prospects for proposal to Division of Personnel Preparation.	September 12, 1980
Project evaluator and project coordinator meet with grant writer Brunazzi to discuss outline and premise of proposal to Model Handicapped Program, OSE.	September 13, 1980
Phone contact with Buffington Associates regarding their proposal to OSE and potential involvement of Living Stage. Project director agrees to be consultant should grant be awarded.	September 15, 1980
Project director leads staff meeting with both artistic and administrative staff.	September 15, 1980
Beginning of two month intensive rehearsal/ training period for actor/educators	September 15, 1980
D.C. Consortium meeting at National Children's Center. Discussion includes: pay adjustments for consultants; possible BEH supplement request; calendar of upcoming events. Project coordinator consents to chair membership committee.	September 16, 1980
Project coordinator completes D.C. Consortium budget breakdown for application to Grants and Contracts.	September 16, 1980
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding plans to meet with evaluation panel members in Chicago to expand panel review model and discuss strategies for this year's evaluation.	September 16, 1980
Project coordinator and grants consultant meet with OSE project officer Bill Hillman to discuss feasibility of Living Stage training model and funding potential of proposal to Division of Personnel Preparation.	September 17, 1980

Activity	Date
Project coordinator meets with project director to discuss progress of program activities to date, i.e. contact with school site administrative staff; BEH meeting, etc.	September 18, 1980
Project director speaks with Fairfax County Assistant Director of Special Services regarding program continuation at Fairhill School.	September 19, 1980
Telephone consultation with grants consultant L. Shapiro regarding need for additional material to be included in personnel preparation proposal, i.e. letters of support, list of performance/workshops over last 10 years, etc.	September 22, 1980
Phone contact with new Fairhill principal regarding meeting to discuss logistics of program implementation. Meeting with Fairhill staff and project director and coordinator set for October 3rd.	September 23, 1980
Phone contact with D.C. Public Schools Superintendent, Doris Woodsen. Dr. Woodsen agrees to write letter in support of Project director teaching course in improvisational theatre techniques at American University (for inclusion in personnel preparation proposal).	September 23, 1980
Packet of descriptive materials on HCEEP project off to Fairhill principal in preparation for October 3rd meeting.	September 24, 1980
Meeting with consultant Shapiro to discuss personnel preparation proposal.	September 25, 1980
Project coordinator meets with Sharpe Health principal and participating teachers to begin arrangements for program continuation at Sharpe Health School.	September 26, 1980
Phone contact with MSSD drama instructor Tim McCarthey, regarding possibility of working with deaf teenagers at MSSD in '81. Meeting date set for October 2.	September 29, 1980
Project coordinator prepares course outline to submit with training proposal to Division of Personnel Preparation.	September 29, 1980
Living Stage presents program for Arena employees to familiarize them with the work. Approximately 75 in attendance.	October 1, 1980

Activity	Date
Phone contact with Jane Williams regarding proposal to Handicapped Model Programs. Meeting set for October 7.	October 2, 1980
Telephone consultation with L. Shapiro regarding final draft of personnel preparation application to be completed October 3.	October 2, 1980
Director of development, project coordinator and grant writer, E. Brunazzi, meet with drama instructor Tim McCarthey at Gallaudet College to discuss logistics of Living Stage working with MSSD students in '81. McCarthey very responsive and supportive of model program. Agrees to write letter of support for proposal.	October 2, 1980
Project director, associate director, director of development and project coordinator meet with new Fairhill principal Harrison Morris at Fairhill School. Discussion includes selection of children, age groups, handicapping conditions, parent support, etc. Decision made to keep Living Stage program scheduled as an after-school program as Mondays are a half-day of school.	October 3, 1980
Project director reviews and revises draft of training proposal to Personnel Preparation.	October 3, 1980
Living Stage submits proposal to Division of Personnel Preparation.	October 6, 1980
Project coordinator and grant writer Brunazzi meet with Handicapped Model Programs project officer Jane Williams to outline and discuss Living Stage proposal for project at MSSD in '81-82. Discussion includes grant criteria with special emphasis on model design for replication.	October 7, 1980
Telephone consultation with D.C. Consortium president Elaine Vowels regarding membership committee. Meeting set for October 17.	October 10, 1980
Project director conducts improvisational theatre workshop at the Kennedy Center for special education. See Appendix for brochure.	October 11, 1980
Project coordinator and project director meet to discuss selection of participating children for Fairhill program.	October 13, 1980
Project coordinator speaks with assistant to principal at Fairhill regarding lists of addresses, birthdates, and handicapping conditions of participating children.	October 14, 1980

Activity	Date
Phone contact with Sharpe Health principal regarding logistics of program continuation. Meeting to clarify details set for October 20.	October 4, 1980
Telephone consultation with D.C. Consortium consultant to discuss various strategies for expansion of membership to D.C. Consortium. Date of next Consortium meeting: October 21.	October 15, 1980
Phone contact with First Step Pre-School Handicapped Institute Director regarding invitation for Living Stage to participate in First-Step Conference in South Carolina, Spring, 1981.	October 16, 1980
Consultation at Fairhill School with principal regarding program logistics, i.e. lunch schedules, space, selection of children, transportation, etc.	October 16, 1981
Telephone consultation with E. Brunazzi regarding preliminary arrangements with MSSD to insure fulfillment of Handicapped Model Program grant criteria.	October 17, 1980
Project Impact extends an invitation to Living Stage to act as resource in training parents of pre-school handicapped children. Project director gives consent.	October 17, 1980
Meeting with D.C. Consortium president Elaine Vowels to discuss tentative guidelines for new membership in Consortium. Proposal includes: that new members be from private or public programs which serve handicapped children, make single and organizational membership available, dues, etc.	October 20, 1980
Project coordinator meets with Sharpe Health principal and teachers to discuss selection of participating children, scheduling logistics, teacher training schedules, etc.	October 20, 1980
D.C. Consortium meeting at Arena Stage. Agenda includes: discussion of expansion of membership; new bylaws; progress reports by consultants; presentation by Anne Palmore, coordinator of SIG to develop standards for pre-school programs in D.C.	October 21, 1980
Project coordinator meets with project director to discuss program activties to date.	October 22, 1980

Activity	Date
Telephone consultation with Fairhill teacher regarding inclusion of additional child (with special needs) in the Living Stage program. Teacher requests special consideration for this child. Project director gives consent.	October 24, 1980
Telephone consultation with grant writer E. Brunazzi regarding Edgar regulations for MSSD proposal. Discussion of position titles, time allottments, scheduling with MSSD, potential advisory council members.	October 27, 1980
Letter and information packet to First Step Director Monahan in response to invitation to Living STage to participate in First Step conference in '81.	October 28, 1980
Project coordinator and E. Brunazzi meet to discuss potential replication plan for MSSD model project.	October 30, 1980
Preparation of parent letter to Fairhill parents to describe Living Stage program and to obtain permission for their child's participation.	October 31, 1980
Project coordinator and Associate director meet to brainstorm ideas for parents involvement.	October 31, 1980
Telephone consultation with Sharpe Health principal regarding teacher training. Meeting set for November 5.	October 31, 1980
Project coordinator consults with project director with regard to program activities to date.	November 4, 1980
Meeting with Sharpe Health principal to discuss logistics of teacher training schedule and "whole school" demonstration.	November 5, 1980
Telephone consultation with program evaluator regarding child selection and initial steps for this year's evaluation.	November 5, 1980
Telephone consultation with E. Brunazzi to further discuss replication ideas for MSSD model.	November 6, 1980
Project director and project coordinator discuss and plan upcoming workshop schedule; tentative dates set for parent meeting and therapy orientation meeting.	November 10, 1980
Letter to Sharpe Health parents describing program and requesting permission for children to participate in HCEEP project.	November 11, 1980

Activity	Date
Meeting with Sharpe Health teacher to discuss selection of three children from pre-kindergarten class eligible for Living Stage program.	November 12, 1980
Fairfax Journal expresses interest in writing article on HCEEP program at Fairhill School. Three Fairhill parents agree to be interviewed; photos are selected.	November 12, 1980
Telephone consultation with new Fairhill principal regarding first parent meeting; therapy orientation and staff orientation, etc.	November 12, 1980
Initial interview with Fairfax Journal reporter, Barbara Gordon, on HCEEP project.	November 12, 1980
Telephone consultation with BEH project officer, Kay Chase, regarding language from PL 94-142 regulations which supports use of the arts to educate handicapped children; variety of relevant references discussed. Information relayed to grant writer to supplement MSSD proposal.	November 13, 1980
Membership steering committee meets at DC General Hospital to draft guidelines for membership.	November 14, 1980
Living Stage company gives benefit performance at McLean Community Center, Va. Approximately 100 people present. Descriptive materials distributed.	November 16, 1980
Project coordinator meets with Sharpe Health teachers to discuss tentative outline of teacher training workshop.	November 17, 1980
Associate director Rebecca Rice and project coordinator meet with Fairhll Center principal and teaching and therapy staff to orient them to Living Stage program.	November 18, 1980
D.C. Consortium meeting at D.C. General Hospital. Agenda includes discussion of proposed membership guidelines, and progress report by development coordinator and program coordinator.	November 18, 1980
Advisory board meets at Arena Stage. Agenda includes: discussion of potential funding sources in Fairfax County, i.e. Mobil Oil --possibility of continuation funding after July '81.	November 18, 1980

Activity	Date
Telephone consultation with Fairhill principal regarding permission slips, transportation arrangements, confirmation of therapy orientation.	November 20, 1980
Meeting with project director to confirm final arrangements for opening workshop at Fairhill.	November 21, 1980
First performance/workshop at Fairhill Center School for 16 4-8 year old children.	November 24, 1980
Fairhill therapy staff orient Living Stage staff to specific handicapping condition of each participating child, i.e. what the major problems are and how their physical needs can be met.	November 24, 1980
Fairfax Journal reporter Barbara Gordon views Living Stage workshop at Fairhill to gather firsthand information on HCEEP program for article.	November 24, 1980
Project coordinator meets with Sharpe Health teachers to discuss and confirm program logistics in preparation for opening workshop.	November 25, 1980
Project coordinator and project director meet to discuss dissemination workshops in '81.	November 25, 1980
Opening performance/workshop at Sharpe Health School for 14 4-6 year old children.	November 26, 1980
Production coordinator videotape Fairhill workshop for evaluation purposes.	December 1, 1980
Project coordinator attends sessions at BEH, HCEEP Project Directors Conference at Shoreham Hotel, and distributes descriptive materials.	December 1-4, 1980
Meeting with Sharpe Health principal to discuss whole school demonstrations, potential strategies for increasing parent involvement, film project, etc.	December 3, 1980
Letter of invitation to Fairhill parents to first parent meeting set for December 8.	December 4, 1980
Project coordinator visits Fairhill to meet with teachers regarding transportation problems for certain children.	December 4, 1980
Parent meeting led by director Robert Alexander with principal and seven parents present.	December 8, 1980
Media consultant contracted to develop slide/tape presentation on D.C. Consortium projects. Consultant to view each project in session.	December 10, 1980

Activity	Date
Director contacts handicapped artist Henry Holden to invite him to participate in Living Stage workshops at both project sites. Dates set tenatively for March 9 and 11. (Holden has made two previous site visits in spring, 1980).	December 11, 1981
Telephone consultation with TADS consultant regarding specific technical assistance to meet needs of project in third year. Decision made to enroll Living Stage staff member in Grantsmanship Center seminar in spring '81 to aid Living Stage in its search for continuation funding.	December 12, 1980
Project coordinator meets with Fairhill principal to discuss program implementation to date,i.e. parent involvement, filming logistics, etc.	December 15, 1980
D.C. Consortium meeting at Howard University. Agenda includes discussion of potenital brochure (new); new members are voted in.	December 16, 1980
Meeting of Living Stage advisory council. Agenda includes discussion of new documentary film on Living Stage, ideas for spring benefit and potential funding sources.	December 16, 1980
Media consultant B.J. Hudson views Living Stage workshop at Sharpe Health to aid in preparation of slide presentation on D.C. Consortium.	December 17, 1980
Production coordinator videotapes Sharpe Health session as part of evaluation design by project evaluator.	December 17, 1980
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding components of this year's evaluation plan: parent questionaires; video taping; teacher attitudinal scales.	December 17, 1980
Project director and project coordinator proof and review rough draft of proposal to Handicapped Model Programs (in Elementary and Secondary Education Division).	December 18, 1980
Telephone consultation with D.C. Consortium consultant, L. Shapiro, regarding consortium budget and child action line.	December 19,1980
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding progress of videotaping at school sites to date.	December 22, 1980

Activity	Date
Project director and project coordinator discuss necessary arrangements for film crew to film at both project sites.	December 29, 1980
Project director and project coordinator discuss potential workshop sites across the country to fulfill last phase of project dissemination and replication plan for '81. Sites include: Madison, Wisconsin, Boston, Massachusetts, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.	December 30, 1980
TV News 9 contacts Arena Stage regarding possibility of special feature on Living Stage's work with physically disabled children. Arrangements made to film Living Stage at Fairhill School January 5.	January 2, 1981
Project coordinator meets with Fairhill principal to discuss changes in workshop schedule and arrangements for film crew.	January 5, 1981
T.V. crew cancels due to sudden emergency situation.	January 5, 1981
Arena p.r. assistant views Living Stage workshop at Fairhill School in order to better articulate the work in pursuing contacts with regard to International Year of the Disabled.	January 5, 1981
Associate director and project coordinator meet with Fairhill physical therapist for specific instructions for handling spina bifida child during workshop hours.	January 5, 1981
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding workshop schedule at project sites and arrangements for evaluator site visit.	January 7, 1981
Project coordinator contacts Lesley College drama instructor with regard to arrangements for dissemination workshop in March '81. Ms. Clapton agrees to coordinate arrangements in Boston.	January 8, 1981
Project coordinator and production coordinator from Film, Inc. visit Fairhill site in preparation for filmming to commence on February 2. Meeting with principal to confirm necessary arrangements for film crew.	January 9, 1981
Packet of descriptive materials to Boston liaison in preparation for March workshop.	January 9, 1981

Activity	Date
Meeting of advisory council. Agenda includes discussion of dissemination plans, i.e. 2-day workshops in Boston, Ma.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Madison, Wis.; Hawaii.	January 12, 1981
Project coordinator meets with parents of new child to explain Living Stage program.	January 12, 1981
All videotapes sent project evaluator for screening.	January 12, 1981
D.C. Consortium meeting at Howard University. Agenda includes progress reports from program and development coordinator; clarification of bylaws.	January 13, 1981
Project coordinator and director of development attend Arena Committee on the Handicapped. Agenda includes discussion of accessibility; the International Year of the Disabled and the possibility of sponsoring a public awareness event at Arena with all Washington theatres participating.	January 14, 1981
Meeting with Larry Shapiro to discuss feasibility of outreach and various potential models and strategies for replication.	January 15, 1981
Telephone consultation with S.C. Arts Commission Arts in Schools Director Frank McNutt with regard to possibility of dissemination workshop in Myrtle Beach in May '81. Mr. McNutt agrees to coordinate arrangements for May workshop along with Special Constituencies director Melvin Davis.	January 15, 1981
Telephone consultation with TADS consultant regarding grantsmanship seminar and abstract for Director of BEH project.	January 16, 1981
Sharpe Health principal cancels (previously scheduled) Living Stage demonstration for school assembly due to conflict in school schedule.	January 16, 1981
Project coordinator completes updated abstract on HCEEP project for (TADS) BEH director and TADS survey questionaire.	January 19, 1981
Telephone consultation with D.C. Consortium president regarding membership committee meeting.	January 20, 1981

Activity	Date
New child enters Living Stage program at Sharpe Health. Meeting with parent to explain purpose of Living Stage project.	January 21, 1981
Meeting with Sharpe Health assistant principal regarding changes in upcoming schedule due to Living Stage residency in Milwaukee in February.	January 21, 1981
Project coordinator and project director meet to discuss regional workshop schedule.	January 22, 1981
Staff meeting led by project director.	January 23, 1981
Project coordinator contacts Consortium members to arrange membership committee meeting. Date set for February 4.	January 26, 1981
Phone contact with Boston liaison Anna Clopton regarding progress of workshop arrangements to date.	January 27, 1981
Telephone consultation with Fairhill parent regarding permission to film child in Living Stage workshop on February 2. Parent grants permission.	January 27, 1981
Descriptive materials sent to S.C. Arts Commission to aid preparation.	January 28, 1981
Project coordinator contacts Fairhill parents to request their participation in a parent interview for the film on Living Stage's work. Three parents agree to interview.	January 28-30, 1981
Film crew views workshop at Fairhill site and interviews 2 parents of participating children.	February 2, 1981
Project coordinator meets with Fairhill principal to review changes in workshop schedule for February.	February 2, 1981
In-depth consultation with project director regarding schedule and content of upcoming dissemination workshops.	February 3, 1981
Consortium membership committee meets at Howard University to draft guidelines for expansion of membership.	February 4, 1981
Project coordinator speaks with Boston liaison regarding arrangements and dates.	February 5, 1981

Activity	Date
Company leaves for Milwaukee for 10-day residency to disseminate work to large, mixed group of professionals in social services across the state of Wisconsin. Initially, professionals participate in Living Stage workshop, then they are allowed to observe the company working with mentally retarded adults and juvenile delinquents throughout the week.	February 6-16, 1981
Fairfax Journal requests to view work at Fairhill. Site visit schedule for February 23.	February 6, 1981
Marve Harty of PM Magazine contacts Living Stage regarding possibility of special feature program highlighting programs for the disabled. Descriptive materials sent to PM Magazine.	February 9, 1981
Project coordinator completes Dissemin/Action questionaire regarding product development for Living Stage project, i.e. training manual for workshop participants.	February 10, 1981
Telephone consultation with D.C. Consortium president regarding membership meeting. Executive committee meeting set for February 13 at D.C. General.	February 11, 1981
Director of development arranges for site visits of two advisory council members to view Fairhill workshop. Set for February 23.	February 12, 1981
Project coordinator contacts parents involved in last year's program with regard to forming advocacy group. Meeting set for February 23 at Fairhill.	February 13-19, 1981
Project coordinator meets with D.C. Consortium president to discuss recommendations of membership committee for expansion of general membership.	February 13, 1981
Project coordinator meets with members of Program Standards and Guidelines subcommittee of SIG (Public Schools) to discuss goals and objectives of subcommittee.	February 13, 1981
D.C. Consortium board meeting at Howard University. Agenda includes: evaluation of project and development coordinator; discussion of proposal for election to the board of directors; discussion of workshop schedules sponsored by individual member projects.	February 17, 1981

Activity	Date
Project coordinator meets with Sharpe Health teacher to discuss specific problems of participating child.	February 18, 1981
Project coordinator and director meet to discuss upcoming Boston workshops, i.e. logistics, format, etc.	February 19, 1981
Cultural Alliance Newsletter editor, Dave Cutler, interviews project coordinator on HCEEP project. Article to appear in March issue.	February 19, 1981
Two reporters from Fairfax Journal view HCEEP program at Fairhill School and conduct interviews of project coordinator and director of development.	February 23, 1981
Two advisory council members view performance/ workshop to gain a better understanding of Living Stage's work. Board members also meet with principal.	February 23, 1981
Project coordinator meets with Fairfax teacher to discuss specific behavior problems of participating child.	February 23, 1981
Project coordinator firms up workshop logistics with Boston coordinator.	February 24, 1981
D.C. Consortium president Elain Vowels resigns. Project coordinator steps into the presidency.	February 24, 1981
Letter to parents regarding special guest artist Henry Holden. Site visit: March 9-11.	February 25, 1981
Project coordinator and director of development prepare proposal for the Self Foundation of Freewood, S.C. to seek additional funds for expansion of dissemination workshops in Myrtle Beach, SC. in May '81.	February 25-27, 1981
Project coordinator consults with various parents in search of transportation arrangements to enable child to participate in program. Fairhill parent agrees to pick up child after program.	February 26, 1981
Living Stage gives tote bag to Fairhill teacher in appreciation of her support of the program (Teacher leaving Fairhill).	February 26, 1981
Project coordinator meets with Fairhill principal to discuss arrangements for whole school assembly for performance by handicapped actor Henry Holden.	February 27, 1981

Activity	Date
Fairhill principal and project coordinator discuss additional arrangements concerning Henry Holden's site visit, i.e. early morning meeting with entire staff of orthopedic wing, followed by whole school assembly, and, later, a meeting with interested parents.	March 2, 1981
Telephone consultation with actor Henry Holden to confirm logistics of site visit to both schools, March 9-11.	March 3, 1981
Phone contact with Eva Molner regarding new Consortium brochure in the process.	March 3, 1981
Telephone consultation with project evaluator Nich Anastasiow regarding his site visit. Dates set for March 23-26.	March 4, 1981
Project coordinator meets with Sharpe Health teachers regarding workshop schedules for remainder of school year.	March 4, 1981
Project coordinator arranges additional site visit for guest artist Henry Holden at private school for able-bodied children.	March 4, 1981
In-depth briefing by vacating Consortium president on the Consortium activiites in progress and responsibilities of president.	March 6, 1981
Fairhill principal confirms site visit arrangements for actor Henry Holden on March 9.	March 6, 1981
Arrangements made for reporter from Washington Post to view the workshop at Sharpe Health on March 11.	March 6, 1981
Phone contact with Project Upstart Director Lee Walshe regarding consortium newsletter.	March 6, 1981
Guest artist Henry Holden performs for entire Fairhill School after early morning meeting with staff from orthopedic wing. Later Mr. Holden participates in the Living Stage workshop. Workshop is followed by parent meeting. Mr. Holden talks with parents. Response from staff, children and parents is overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic.	March 9, 1981
Telephone consultation with Frank McNutt, coordinator of Myrtle Beach workshop.	March 10, 1981
Henry Holden performs for abled-bodied pre-schoolers at local private school.	March 10, 1981
Henry Holden performs in Living Stage workshop at Sharpe Health School.	March 11, 1981

Activity	Date
Patron and honorary board member, Dottie Kidder, views Sharpe Health workshop.	March 11, 1981
Washington Post reporter views Living Stage workshop at Sharpe Health. (See appendix for subsequent article).	March 11, 1981
Arrangements made for 4 interested and influential individuals in Fairfax County to view Fairhill workshop on March 23.	March 12, 1981
Living Stage Advisory Council meeting. Project coordinator reports on site visit of disabled actor Henry Holden. Agenda includes potential fundraisers for '81-82.	March 16, 1981
D.C. Consortium meeting at Howard University Pediatric Model Center. Agenda includes discussion of bylaws, articles of incorporation, workshop planning, progress reports of consultants.	March 17, 1981
Arrangements made for meeting with parent of participating child and Fairhill teacher and principal to discuss child's continued participation with program. Teacher recommends that child be removed from the program due to behavior problems.	March 18, 1981
Telephone consultation with Boston workshop coordinator regarding response to date from potential workshop participants.	March 19, 1981
Associate director and project coordinator meet with Fairhill parent, teacher, and principal to discuss child's participation in program. Consensus is reached to allow the child to finish out the year in HCEEP program.	March 20, 1981
Project evaluator views workshop at Fairhill and meets with principal afterwards.	March 23, 1981
Living Stage council member brings three visitors to view HCEEP program at Fairhill site: a Virginia delegate, Executive Director of Commission on Extended Day Care,, Virginia Commission on Children. Visitors are interested in aiding efforts to locate funds for program's continuation in Fairfax County.	March 23, 1981

Activity	Date
Associate director and project coordinator meet with Fairhill teacher and parent to discuss and plan specific objectives for participating child. Decision reached to closely coordinate efforts to achieve these objectives in both classroom and workshop to facilitate carryover impact.	March 23, 1981
Project coordinator meets with of Fairhill parents to discuss proposed OMB budget cuts and their implications for Living Stage's work as well as the field of special education.	March 23, 1981
Project coordinator meets with Sharpe Health assistant principal to discuss workshop schedule for remainder of school year.	March 24, 1981
Project director and project coordinator discuss Boston workshops and outline components together.	March 24, 1981
Project coordinator attends SIG subcommittee meeting to help draft program standards and guidelines for handicapped pre-schoolers in D.C. meeting at UPO.	March 24, 1981
Project evaluator views Living Stage workshop at Sharpe Health.	March 25, 1981
Patron Dorothy Kidder contacts Boston Globe editor to inform him of the upcoming workshop led by project director. Editor assures coverage of workshop.	March 26, 1981
Dr. Alexander Pierce (movement therapist) contacts Living Stage regarding initiating similar program in California. Arrangements made for site visit to Sharpe Health.	March 27, 1981
Telephone consultation with Boston workshop coordinator regarding public responses to workshop. Number of participants tentative.	March 30, 1981
Associate director and project coordinator discuss and confirm plans for final parent meeting on April 6 at Fairhill. Project coordinator prepares letter of invitation to Fairhill parents.	March 30, 1981
Meeting with D.C. Consortium program coordinator for in-depth discussion of Consortium activities and goals.	March 31, 1981
California movement therapist, Dr. Pierce, views HCEEP program at Sharpe Health to gather pertinent information to aid replication of Living Stage model in California.	April 1, 1981

Activity	Date
Howard University graduate student in special education views Sharpe Health workshop to gather information for special project assignment to design curriculum for handicapped pre-schoolers.	April 1, 1981
Telephone consultation with TADS consultant Jim Cox regarding grantsmanship seminar. Project coordinator to participate in June instead of April due to scheduling conflict.	April 2, 1981
Phone contact with Consortium treasurer regarding current financial status of Consortium.	April 2, 1981
Phone contact with Project Impact coordinator regarding upcoming IMPACT workshop on April 28.	April 2, 1981
Final parent meeting at Fairhill school. Seven parents attend. Associate director leads meeting and answers questions regarding specific progress of children. Parents very supportive of program and discuss specific benefits they have observed in their children at home. Parents express sincere regret that there are no funds for program continuation for 1981-82.	April 6, 1981
Telephone consultation with Consortium program coordinator regarding his resignation.	April 7, 1981
Two advisory council members view Sharpe Health workshop.	April 8, 1981
Final evaluation meeting with Sharpe Health teachers and project staff.	April 8, 1981
Living Stage company gives demonstration performance/workshop for staff of Washington Hospital Center. Approximately 50 staff present.	April 8, 1981
Project coordinator contacts several parents (of Fairhill and Sharpe Health children) for permission to use photos in PSA on local tv stations.	April 9, 1981
Telephone consultation with project coordinator regarding development of final parent questionaire. Project directive to review for possible modifications.	April 9, 1981
Project coordinator and project director leave for Boston to conduct dissemination workshop.	April 10, 1981

Activity	Date
Two day workshop in the use of improvisational theatre techniques with handicapped children for mixed group of 18 educators, theatre artists and therapists. Descriptive materials and bibliography distributed at workshop close.	April 11-12, 1981
Project coordinator attends Annual CEC convention in New York City and disseminates information about Living Stage HCEEP project.	April 13-17, 1981
Washington Star reporter Roger Wilkins accompanies Living Stage company to observe work with senior citizens, incarcerated men and women, and juvenile offenders to gather information for 2-day Star article. (See appendix for article).	April 20-24, 1981
Administrative staff meeting led by newly-hired managing director. Meeting includes exploration of new directions for Living Stage to accomodate upcoming budget cuts.	April 22, 1981
Project coordinator contacts Sun News newspaper in Myrtle Beach, S.C. in attempts to secure coverage of May workshop. Editor Jolley tentatively agrees to assign a reporter.	April 23, 1981
Project coordinator contacts Charlotte Observer newspaper in N.C. in attempts to obtain coverage of Myrtle Beach workshop. Reporter Bob Ashley makes tentative agreement to do article. Descriptive materials mailed to both newspapers to give advance preparation for articles.	April 24, 1981
D.C. Consortium meeting at Arena Stage.	April 27, 1981
Project Impact and TIIP sponsor first Consortium workshop at Blackburn Center, Howard University. Project coordinator and Consortium President introduce workshop and give overview of consortium goals and activities. (See Consortium Progress Report for details).	April 28, 1981
Telephone consultation with project officer regarding potential continuation funding for Consortium '81-82.	April 28, 1981
Project coordinator attends SIG Program Standards and Guidelines subcommittee to further discuss and draft suggestions for ideal policy standards. Input concerns curriculum, staff development, class size, etc.	April 30, 1981

Activity	Date
Project director gives lecture/demonstration to group of 25 senior citizens in Fort Republic, Maryland. Invitation extended by Friends of the Library. Enthusiastic response. (See appendix for letter of appreciation).	April 30, 1981
Project director and project coordinator leave for Myrtle Beach dissemination workshop.	May 1, 1981
Two day workshop in the use of improvisational theatre techniques with handicapped children for mixed group of special educators, drama instructors, and theatre artists. Descriptive materials and bibliography distributed at workshop close. (There was no newspaper coverage of workshop due to conflict in papers' schedules).	May 2-3, 1981
Living Stage advisory council meeting.	May 4, 1981
Telephone consultation with Hawaii liaison Joan Kelly regarding logistics of Maui workshop. Arrangements proceeding well to date.	May 5, 1981
Telephone consultation with Hawaii liaison Tom Larson regarding logistics of Oahu dissemination workshop. Arrangements proceeding well to date.	May 6, 1981
Project coordinator attends SIG Program Standards and Guidelines subcommittee to continue work on rough draft in order to meet SIG deadline.	May 7, 1981
Director of development and project coordinator visit Oak Creek School in Fairfax County to view after school program for emotionally disturbed boys. Oak Creek is potential site for Living Stage in '81-82. Decision contingent on award of grant from Fairfax County EDC (day care program).	May 11, 1981
Project coordinator with D.C. Consortium development coordinator for in-depth discussion of responsibilities and activities necessary to achieve objectives for May and June.	May 13, 1981
Managing director leads administrative staff meeting. Staff members report on activities to date.	May 15, 1981
Project coordinator, project director and director of development meet with Ressurrection Children's Center director to discuss possibility of working with mainstreamed pre-schoolers and teachers on an on-going basis.	May 18, 1981

Activity	Date
D.C. Consortium meeting at Arena Stage. Agenda includes discussion of slate of officers in preparation for June election.	May 19, 1981
Project director, project coordinator, and director of development leave for Hawaii to conduct two dissemination workshops.	May 22, 1981
Two day workshop in the use of improvisational theatre techniques with handicapped children for mixed group of 16 educators, therapists, professors and artists in Maui. Descriptive materials distributed to participants at workshop close.	May 24-25, 1981
Project Upstart sponsors second Consortium workshop to increase public awareness regarding handicapping conditions. Workshop well-received.	May 25, 1981
Meeting with Maui Cameron Center staff to disseminate pertinent information regarding Living Stage's work.	May 26, 1981
Meeting with Maui KoKua Services director George McGuire to discuss future possibility of training for staff of "Women Helping Women" program (for abused women).	May 27, 1981
Two day workshop in the use of improvisational theatre techniques with handicapped children for mixed group of 22 educators, therapists, social workers, drama students, and actors in Oahu. Descriptive materials distributed to participants at workshop close.	May 29-30, 1981
Project director is interviewed by Oahu newspaper reporter about HCEEP project and Oahu workshop. (See Dissemination and Replication section for Hawaii article).	June 1, 1981
Viewing of completed portion of documentary film on Living Stage. Reporter and Hawaii Arts Council director view film.	June 1, 1981
Associate director begins work on end-of-year evaluations on HCEEP program. (Evaluation included in this report).	June 1-30, 1981
Project coordinator begins work on 3-year overview report on HCEEP program.	June 1-July 31, 1981
Telephone consultation with Consortium nominating committee Troy Lee regarding June election.	June 4, 1981

Activity	Date
Project director leads administrative staff meeting and discusses changes ahead in job descriptions. Project coordinator to begin working in development and public relations.	June 5, 1981
Advisory council meeting. Agenda includes discussion of fundraising ideas, i.e. fall benefit, phonathon, etc. and other potential funding sources.	June 6, 1981
Meeting with UPO coordinator Nadine Howells regarding consortium activities and future work plan.	June 8, 1981
Meeting with managing director to explore new job responsibilities, i.e. development of Living Stage training model to give service providers techniques to develop the human potential of their clients.	June 9, 1981
Council member volunteers time to aid project coordinator in developing new training model. Agrees to contact community colleges and private schools to generate interest.	June 10, 1981
Managing director and project coordinator visit with MSSD drama instructor at Gallaudet College to discuss feasibility of MSSD funding Living Stage proposal from their own budget. Mr. McCartey recommends proposal be submitted in '82.	June 11, 1981
Project director leads staff meeting.	June 12, 1981
Phone contact with TADS consultant to confirm arrangements for grantsmanship seminar June 15. Decision reached that assistant to the director will participate in seminar.	June 12, 1981
Meeting with council member to discuss and develop strategies for new training component.	June 15, 1981
Assistant to the director attends grantsmanship workshop to learn new grantwriting skills.	June 15-19, 1981
Project coordinator and project director meet to discuss new training model and to outline initial activities.	June 16, 1981
Project coordinator contacts Goodwill Industries to generate interest in possible training program for staff development at Goodwill.	June 17, 1981
Washington Star article by Roger Wilkins appears.	June 16-17, 1981

Activity	Date
Telephone consultation with Consortium treasurer Judy Garrett regarding slate of officers. Ms. Garrett is interested in the vice presidency.	June 17, 1981
Preparation of D.C. Consortium agenda. In-depth meeting with Consortium development coordinator to discuss activities in progress and upcoming deadlines.	June 21, 1981
Arrangements confirmed for presentation on Living Stage at Goodwill Industries on June 30. Contact is with vice president of Rehabilitative Services.	June 22, 1981
Consortium meeting at D.C. Society for Crippled Children. New officers voted in. Two board slots remain vacant.	June 23, 1981
Telephone consultation with project evaluator regarding evaluation summary to be included in end of year report.	June 24, 1981
Telephone consultation with project officer Carolyn Smith who agrees to intervene on behalf of the Consortium in order to secure payment from a member project for consultant's fees.	June 24, 1981
Project director and managing director lead staff meeting. All staff efforts to focus on securing operating funds for '81-82.	June 26, 1981
Staff receives briefing by assistant to the director on grantsmanship seminar. Input very valuable for all staff.	June 29, 1981
Project coordinator gives presentation on Living Stage to staff of nurses, social workers, shift supervisors, and administrative staff at Goodwill Industries. Eleven staff members present. Presentation includes NBC film, *And Always There's A Rainbow*. Presentation well-received. Genuine interest expressed to have Living Stage training.	June 30, 1981

EVALUATION

LIVING STAGE

Summary Overview: 1978-81

Evaluation of the Living Stage experience and its impact on children who have participated has posed some serious problems. For one, the Living Stage goals are to enhance the children's creative expression and their self-esteem, both difficult constructs to measure. These goals are approached by the Company through the interaction of the actors with each child in an intensive 2- to 3-hour session involving music, dramatics, dramatic play, and many nonverbal body movements and expressions.

The impact of the interaction on the child is often very strong, easy to observe, but difficult to measure in some objective form. Further, when evaluating artistic endeavor, one looks for the impact of the aesthetic experience in the child's behavior both during the session with the artists and in other settings. However, it was part of the agreement with the teachers in the schools who allowed Living Stage to work with their children that no direct comparisons of the classroom with Living Stage would be made. In addition, it is virtually impossible to sort out from a 4½ day classroom experience the total impact of a once-a-week artistic experience upon an individual child.

For example, one child who participated in Living Stage had an all-but-totally paralyzed body. She controlled her arms by jerking her head and neck. During an early session of Living Stage she learned to coordinate her head and neck movements sufficiently to keep time to the beat of a Living Stage song on a tambourine. Her accomplishment was a moving experience for the actors and observers.

In her classroom, a janitor had made her a special lying-down board 2 feet off the floor. There was a hole in the board for her head so she could write with a large pencil held in her mouth. She taught herself to write with the same jerking movements she used to keep time on the tambourine. The professionals in both settings responded to her courage and to her struggle to control her body and accomplish the expected task. Each setting offered her an opportunity for a quite different type of skill development.

Living Stage is not an either/or experience. For most human beings, aesthetic appreciation and participation is a necessary and enriching part of life. Living Stage provides a rich combination of aesthetics--music, drama, dance, movement, and creative expression. These elements do not replace learning to read or learning to care for oneself. They do, however, enhance life and add to the quality of daily living.

Emotions are part of the basic genetic capacity of man. They are present at birth in all human beings, even severely damaged infants. In the first hours of life, infants will smile when sweet substances are placed on their tongues, and withdraw or grimmace if a sour substance is placed on their tongues. Delight and joy can be observed in infants by 7 months of age. We are just beginning to learn about the role of emotions in life, but clearly emotions are man's most basic communication system. Emotions communicate to others through facial expressions, body movement, gestures, and vocal tone and inflection. Emotions also serve as an internal communication system alerting the individual to feelings and emotional states. Oral language serves the same purpose but is a much later development in man's evolutionary history. (For a more complete review see N. J. Anastasiow, *Socioemotional Development*, New Directions for Exceptional Children, No. 5, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, California, 1981.)

What is important to note is that many of the handicapped children who participated in *Living Stage*, particularly at Sharpe Health, could not communicate orally. Further, all the children had physical impairments which impeded normal development. The major contribution of *Living Stage* to these children was to enlarge their repertoire of communication skills in both the nonverbal/emotional range, and the verbal range, when it was possible to do so.

Observing video tapes of an early *Living Stage* session with the children, one sees individual children watching, some apprehensive, some delighted, and some fearful. Observing these same children toward the end of the term, they are actively involved--watching when it's time to watch, participating fully when it's time to join the actors. In the dramatic story session in which the children are to create an ending for the story, *every* child had an ending to contribute.

Parents (see the 1979-80 report) stated that following *Living*

Stage their children were better able to communicate with them and thereby the parent was better able to communicate with the child. The children were more alert, more active, and more interested in what was happening in the environment. Parents have confessed to school personnel that they find their children more human. Severely damaged children who have little coordination have learned how to express their emotions in a positive constructive manner and, by so doing, have made a major impact on their family and their approach to him or her. This responsiveness, of course, is cyclical in that parental displays of love increase the child's self-respect, thereby increasing his or her participation in class and in Living Stage.

One must keep in mind what a burden these children are for their parents, particularly parents who reside in lower socioeconomic conditions. Some of these parents cannot afford to hire a babysitter and will send their child to school in all types of weather and in all states of health. Some of these children spend hours alone. For the parents of these children to discover that they can communicate with them more readily is to have opened a major means of enriching the parents' and child's life. The principal, teachers, and school psychologist at Sharpe Health have all attested to the major impact Living Stage has had on the emotional/communicative development of these children.

ON-GOING EVALUATION OF THE COMPANY

The director of the Company, Robert Alexander, meets with his Company daily before the beginning of each session. In acting terminology, these are called rehersals, but in essence they are teaching-evaluation sessions in which the director assists actors in refining their techniques, developing new skills, and working together as a company.

In this setting, Mr. Alexander conveys the goals and objectives of the Living Stage and makes explicit what he hopes the Company can achieve with children.

Once the Company begins to work with the children, Mr. Alexander and assistant director, Rebecca Rice, meet with the Company immediately following the performance to evaluate the day. These sessions are called Note Sessions. During these sessions the director critiqued the actors' performance and the children's involvement with the actors. The actors also critiqued their own performance and the session. Ideas were presented on how to improve performances and how to engage individual children more effectively. The Note Session provided the planning for the next performance.

In addition, records are kept of the Note Session and of the discussion of each child's involvement and growth. These records form the bases of case studies of the children (see below).

The Company's work is continuously evaluated by critics who view their work. A record of letters and reviews which attest to the Company's excellence as a unique and talented improvisational theatre group is on file with the Company.

The evaluator involved special education specialists in providing information about the nature of the handicapping conditions the children possessed. Drs. Una Haynes of the United Cerebral Palsy group gave a one-day workshop, and Dr. Joseph Bleiberg, psycho-neurologist, formerly of Braintree Hospital in Boston, attended a performance and Note Session and gave his feedback to the director. In addition, Dr. Nancy Carlson of Michigan State University site-reviewed the project and made a series of recommendations. A major recommendation of Dr. Carlson was to have Living Stage hire a special educator to serve as a liaison between the Company and schools. In addition, the special educator was to serve as a resource specialist to the Company. Wendy Haynes, M.A. in Special Education, was hired to fulfill that role in both respects. She has conducted formal and informal training with the Company and the personnel in the schools, as well as coordinated the schedules of the school and Company. All attest to the excellence of her work.

Thus, the objective to assist the Company in carrying out its goals was met through observation and critiques by specialists and the evaluator. More directly, the Company's goals were facilitated by the special educator hired as assistant director.

To determine the impact on the children was more difficult. Several techniques were tried.

PAPER AND PENCIL TESTS

In previous years, paper and pencil tests have demonstrated a positive impact of Living Stage on children's measured self-concept during the course of the year (see 1978-79 Report). Due to the fact that some children in the class had little or no oral language, these paper and pencil measures were not suitable for the total group who have participated. They provide some support evidence for those children who can follow directions and are able to communicate their answer. However, generally speaking, paper and pencil techniques have been abandoned as evaluation devices for Living Stage.

OBSERVATIONAL SCALES

Spaulding's Coping Analyses Schedule for Educational Settings (CASES) was used to detect children's responsiveness to Living Stage. Spaulding's classroom observational scale was used because it presents a full range of children's behaviors and situations normally presented in school classrooms. In addition, the scale can be scored as desirable/nondesirable behavior. Thus, it could be used both for Living Stage and for the regular classroom. The results of using the scale were positive in that the children were observed to be participating in the activities with the Company as desired by the Company. Little time was spent in off-task behaviors. The same was true in the regular classroom. Children were participating in activities the teacher desired. In both settings, the children followed the directions of the session leader, i.e., classroom teacher or actor, but the nature of the activities varied. In the classroom, the children might sit quietly listening to other children read. In the Living Stage setting, they might have become actively involved with their peers and the actors as they played out the end of a story. The activities in the two settings were dramatically different, and while the classroom observation scale confirmed that children participated in Living Stage, the scale did not explicate the differences. Readers of the evaluation report, however, had to value the nature of the Living Stage experience. If the readers valued the experience, they read the report as positive. If they did not value the experience, the observation report told them little as to the value of the experience. Other classroom scales were constructed but suffered from the same effect: they could not make the values of Living Stage explicit. Values had to be inferred and perceived as desirable.

PANEL REVIEW STRATEGY

The Panel Review Strategy was invented to solve some of the problems inherent in evaluation of Living Stage (see 1979-80 report). The basic premise was that an artistic endeavor must be assessed by critics who are aware of the goals of the artists, and the involvement of the participants and can assess the impact of the experience on the participants. The panel would act as connoisseurs as well as policy decision-makers.

The results were highly successful and offer to the profession both the means of evaluating complex programs and the means of making decisions about them. A section from the summary follows:

In summary, one can see the panel review members found the Living Stage to be a valuable contribution to the lives of handicapped children on a broad set of dimensions.

The panel members made specific suggestions for improvement of the Living Stage experience. These include a ratio of fewer adults to children; care that adult themes not be used in play where children's themes can be used in play; timing of the pieces so that they are not overextended and the pacing is not too slow; care in not over-attempting to include all children's ideas and thereby overworking them or making the theme meaningless; and an increase in opportunities for cooperation among children.

Many of these suggestions have been determined by the company itself and can be found in the logs they keep of their own evaluation sessions. All suggestions in this report have been transmitted to the director, as Living Stage is a constantly-evolving process of growth for the company as well as for children.

Potential Interpretations of the Living Stage Impact

Gross, Piaget's predecessor, suggested that play allowed the child to experience the "joy of being the cause." Developmental psychologists have long recognized this phenomenon in the play behavior of infants in banging pots and pans, dropping objects from high chairs, and commanding parents' attention through smiles and cries. For many handicapped children the "joy" of being a "cause" has been denied them through the physical impairments of their bodies.

Wertheim's (1975) review of current research regarding mastery in developmental psychology points out that there are two major developmental characteristics to be achieved for adequate human functioning: autonomy, and competence. Eric Erickson has postulated that autonomy is the first and most basic achievement of humans and Robert White has postulated that competence or basic feelings of efficacy is an equivalent statement. For the handicapped child, the attainment of autonomy and the full feeling of individual competence are extremely difficult to achieve.

The panel members repeatedly note that Living Stage provides youngsters with opportunities to develop autonomy and competence. The panel see these qualities reflected in the behaviors of the children. The explicit study of behavior, known as behaviorism, has a long history and has recently become unshackled from a narrow interpretation and expanded to a very broad one in psychology by Bandura (1978) and in special education by Bricker (1978) and Guralnick (1978). Bandura has reintroduced the construct of "self-efficacy" as a central attainment of humans. To this writer, self-efficacy is a combination of autonomy and competence and is a viable construct towards which to work in educational programs with disabled children.

The Living Stage promotes self-efficacy, mastery and autonomy in an enriched environment containing responsive people and responsive objects. As has been well-documented in animal research, allowing the individual animal to explore enriched environments results in greater brain weight, altered structures in the brain--both old brain areas as the cerebellum and new structures such as the visual system, increased number of dendrites, and increased number of synapses among neurons (Anastasiow, 1980). In the animal research, the effects of an enriched responsive environment is much greater than the impact of training. It would seem clear that if an individual, such as a nonimpaired, normally developing child, is assisted in gaining access to an enriched environment, the impact on his development will be great (Werner and Smith, 1979; Bradley, Caldwell and Elardo, 1979).

Gayle Mindes has provided the following quotation from Theater News which speaks to similar issues of importance to Living Stage.

'Educational programs attempting to mainstream the physically and mentally handicapped into society as participating, contributing members have necessarily emphasized the acquisition of basic life or survival skills. However, the arts have been recognized as effective supplements to these basic skills in the development of perceptual, manipulative social skills, as well as creative ability. Theatre, involving verbal, motor, visual and social skills, is an especially useful tool for learning' (Theatre News, 1977, 1).

In order to support the idea of Living Stage one must value the development of social skills and creativity. Clearly the impact is profound; but profundity, like beauty, is found in the eye of the beholder. The panel found cognitive and social skill development, but they also found joy and beauty.

CASE STUDIES

The Company kept a weekly log on each child. These logs were assembled at the end of the year and presented a comprehensive overview of the child's participation and growth in Living Stage. Case studies have the strength of presenting a comprehensive picture (refer to reports for 1978-79, 1979-80). The weakness is the subjective nature of the data collection and the potential bias of the observer/participant. Living Stage has maintained case material on every child participating in the BEH Grant. These case studies provide an impressive set of information on the children's growth in creative expression, self-concept, and feelings of independence and competence. They provide a rich source of anecdotes from actors, children, and parents on the impact of Living Stage on the lives of these children. The case studies uniformly attest to the positive growth of children who have experienced Living Stage.

TIME SERIES ANALYSES

A meeting was held with special education and play specialists to devise a strategy for collecting time series analyses of individual children's behavior during Living Stage. This panel included: Dr. Joseph Bleiberg, of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago; Dr. Sam Meisels, Chairman of the Department of Special Education of the University of Michigan; and Dr. Gayle Mindes of Roosevelt University. The Panel met to determine which behaviors could be clearly specified for this purpose. Many ideas were suggested, but all were ultimately rejected.

Video tapes of the children taken during the first session of the season were viewed to determine if before/after measures could be abstracted from them. However, while the methodology of time series analyses of behaviors is well developed, the constructs that are of interest to Living Stage do not lend themselves to consistent and valid observational means. The global constructs of joy, delight, and pleasure have been observed and reported by the Panel Review team (see the 1979-80 report).

After lengthy discussion, the group felt that valid measures might be developed in the future, but psychology has not advanced the study of emotion to the point where time series methodology could be utilized.

PARENT REPORT

Parent reports have been a source of rich data regarding the impact of Living Stage on their children's lives. Early reports presented overwhelmingly positive parent reactions to Living Stage.

A follow-up of the parent questionnaire was sent during the 1980-81 year. The questionnaire was constructed in cooperation with teachers and principals. The results are presented in Table 1. Note that 70% of the parents felt that Living Stage contributed a great deal. Only one parent felt that Living Stage had not helped and, in this case, on only two of the ten items. This parent noted that her child was already very confident and social and Living Stage added to his competence but did not originally develop it.

Others wrote:

> B. loved Living Stage and would rather have missed a birthday party than Living Stage. She thoroughly enjoyed it. She feels free to express herself now, which was something I noticed after Living Stage. We do hope it will be able to continue in the future. The caring of each member of the staff was very obvious. Very kind and loving.

> I think it was a wonderful experience for K.; to be involved in something with other children in an after school function has made her feel so important--hope Living Stage returns in the Fall.

> My child really enjoyed Living Stage. Every Wednesday M. never wanted to miss school because he said he wanted to be there for the Living Stage program. Every week he looked forward to participate.

> Has been well worth the trip to Herndon. Would like to see more of this type of program.

> I feel this is very worthwhile.

> Excellent program! Through these dedicated professionals I was able to measure my son's progress.

No parent wrote a negative comment. To the contrary, parents felt that Living Stage had helped their children become more alive, more like their other children, and better able to communicate with them. To the parents, the program has had a major impact on their children's lives.

SUMMARY

American education and psychology have been dominated by cognition and measurement. Thorndike's influence led psychology through a period of 50 years' emphasis on the measurement of skills that came to be known as IQ. Following this lead, education has emphasized the "3 R's" and behavior control.

Special education was outside the mainstream and until Sam Kirk's leadership in the 1950s amounted largely to custodial care of handicapped persons. Kirk's demonstrations that mentally retarded children can learn helped special education move into areas of school learning--the 3 R's. Special education likewise spent considerable effort in teaching behavior control and self-help skills. Neither regular nor special education devoted much attention to the arts. Art in the classroom in American elementary schools is in the main coloring with crayons, painting with water colors (primarily in kindergarten and first grade), rare experiences with clay, and perhaps learning a folk dance.

Dance and creative dramatics are introduced rarely in the regular public school classroom and then only in isolated innovative schools. The arts are seldom found in special education programs. The prevailing attitude seems to be that handicapped children must make as much cognitive gain as they can, as fast as they can. Teachers talk as if the cognitive gains will lead to total well being.

Yet, countless physically disabled children sit in semicomatose states in front of television sets in the out-of-school hours. They are unskilled in any of the arts by which they could utilize their creative energies. They lack the facility of engaging in productive fantasy and have been denied the channels of learning alternative modes of communication through lack of instruction.

Living Stage is a necessary and critical addition to the instructional program of handicapped children (and normals as well). Living Stage evokes joy and beauty in these children and models for them and encourages them to find ways of expressing these constructs. The Panel and the parents offer data that the lives of children who have participated in Living Stage have become enriched by the efforts of the dedicated actors and musicians who have spent their considerable creative talents awakening the senses of these damaged children. Living Stage has not only changed the lives of the children but has had impact on the adults who have been fortunate enough to view its work. It has enriched their lives and mine and we shall be forever grateful to it for doing so.

Table 1. Living Stage questionnaire results

Question	A great deal	Some	None
	Number of responses		
1. My child looked forward to Living Stage.	9	1	
2. My child talked about Living Stage.	10		
3. My child sings or hums some of the Living Stage songs at home.	5	5	
4. My child seems more alert after the Living Stage experience.	6	4	
5. I feel Living Stage added to my child's life.	8	2	
6. The actors in Living Stage cared about my child.	8	2	
7. My child and I play some of the Living Stage games.	2	7	1
8. Living Stage activities should be a part of the school program.	9	1	
9. Living Stage helped my child do more things than my child thought he/she could do with his/her handicapping condition.	7	2	1
10. Living Stage has helped my child become more confident.	6	4	
TOTAL:	70	28	2

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FAIRHILL ELEMENTARY

Fairfax, Virginia

1980-81 EVALUATION

By Rebecca Rice
Associate Director
Living Stage Theatre Company

Dear Imagination,

I love you. And I know that you love me, too. Imagination, always be in my world.

Love,

Me

This lyric was improvised to a toe-tapping musical tune and dedicated to that marvelous, and yet largely misunderstood, part of us: our imaginations. For we knew that every Monday from 1:15 until 3:30, the Goddess Imagination was keeping company with The Living Stage Theatre Company and with the children at the Fairhill School in Fairfax, Virginia. We also "boogied" to another song that we all made up together:

One for my momma
Two for my dad
They're the best friends
I've ever had

My momma's so pretty
Do wap diddie
My daddy's the top
Shoo bop do wap do wap
Their love for me
Won't every stop.

With love and creativity on your side, any person — regardless of their life circumstances — possesses two of the most important tools towards realizing all that you have to offer to life.

These children were certainly not short on imagination or creative intelligence or dynamic individuality. Imagination is simply the ability to image, to conjure up pictures from the subconscious mind. Creative intelligence is the ability to be affected emotionally and physically by one's external/internal environment to such an extent that the imagination is triggered and set into motion to affect change (to have an impact on) in the external/internal environment. Dynamic individuality is having trust in your uniqueness and arises from a love of your imagination and enables you to have the courage to act on your own deep feelings and beliefs.

For instance, Jeff is a 7-year-old boy who was the victim of a thalidomide-type drug that his mother took during pregnancy. The drug caused him to be born without limbs — only hands and feet attached to his torso. Contained within this compact frame is a gigantic intelligence. When Jeff first came to us he expressed himself almost sarcastically. His eyes darted around uneasily. He looked for laughs or, even worse, made cryptic comments such as "Oh, come on, Jeff. That's silly."

Very few children ever mocked him; but, he had that fear. His imagination was quite strong but he did not trust or understand it. In one workshop, the actors improvised a scene about a girl whose dreams were not taken seriously by her mother and she was always being called "cute." Her frustration mounted and she decided to run away from home. At that point, we froze the scene and asked the children to tell us how they wanted to see the scene end. Jeff gave this ending:

> *Connie goes home with her mother and her mother gets so angry about her running away that she spanks her. Connie hits her mother back. Besides, her mother was hitting her so Connie would keep smiling when she really wasn't happy at all. But then Connie's dreams started being badder. She dreamed that "cute" was following her everywhere and every time she tried to hit it away, it grew larger. Then her mother took her and tied her up and said she'd stay tied up til she was 60 years old. But even at 60, Connie's dreams and feelings were real strong. So her mother decided to call a bulldozer to smash all of Connie's dreams and to smash her into a pancake. Then the mother started serving Connie as food in a restaurant and then the mother started to eat her up!*

It didn't take long at all for Jeff to see that we certainly took his imagination seriously. We did not respond with laughter or comments or even astonishment. We dealt with him like a playwright — a very good playwright. And because he was good, we queried him on certain points to clear up the action and create a powerful scene that would be played with strength and devoid of silliness.

Jeff and the others were engrossed. It excited him to see his ideas come to life. His fear seemed to disappear. He took himself more seriously. The artistic construction of his creations deepened and he came to expect excellence. He commented on every aspect of the scenes as they were played out. His directing talents blossomed.

Laura (spina bifida) entered the workshops with very little knowledge of play. Adult people, pretending to be other things, seemed to confuse her — even scare her. Being in one place and pretending to be in another was not a concept she even remotely understood. She watched the other children play with an almost blank expression on her face, flashing an occasional forced smile when she caught one of us watching her. We found out from her mother that Laura had no playmates and that she spent nearly all her time at home alone, watching television. She did not interact with other children in her classroom or our workshops. In short, we had to start from the ground floor.

We explained to Laura that we are still ourselves when we are pretending, and always would be; but, that while we are pretending we are using our imaginations to find out how other people and animals and things feel and live. We can return to ourselves whenever we want. One day, as the other children were pretending they were making a movie, I approached Laura and introduced myself as Gilly, the cook.

"You're Rebecca," Laura said.

"No, I'm Gilly," I replied. "I talk differently than Rebecca and I walk differently than Rebecca." I demonstrated the walk.

"Here's Rebecca." I settled back into my own voice and body and explained that, by changing my body and voice, I would feel differently — like another person. This demonstration gave rise to a game of her calling out "Gilly" or "Rebecca" as I danced back and forth between characters. She laughed and in her laughter I could hear the beginning of her understanding. She accepted our play, but not her own.

As we played with Laura, we each assumed a character and referred to her as a character (although we did not push her to accept it), such as mother or grandmother — someone she could readily grasp. As the other children came over, they incorporated Laura's character into their play. At first, she only stared at them. She even erected a large curtin in one corner of the room and played with only one of us at a time behind the curtin. Slowly the curtin rose and short soirees into the environment began. The other children responded immediately to her new energy; but, rather than greet Laura, they came up with an urgent happening in the environment. Laura's resistance was ignored and the entreaties continued until Laura responded..

Laura's delighted registered in her eyes. The world of play was where she belonged and in her heart she knew it. Her mother talked of how she began "coming out" in other areas of her life. Creativity was giving Laura a way of relating to others and an entre into the stream of activity around her. She and Robbie became friends in play. She and Melissa seemed to enjoy healing people together as nurses or doctors. She eventually asked to be taken out of her wheelchair and scooted around the floor in order to be more involved.

As other children went through their own kinds of creative metamorphosis, the group feeling thickened. At first the creating of imaginary environments that were designed for the purpose of giving the children a lot of freedom to play out their creative impulses and relationships actually stimulated much separateness. The children wanted to divide themselves into smaller groups and get with one Living Stage person and play with little awareness, if any, of what was going on in other parts of the room. Since one of the important reasons for developing creativity is to bring people together to discover commonalities and differens and to learn to work together to solve common problems, we felt it was important to redirect their choices to something more challenging.

We began to create environments where there was a common task that was important to each character. For instance, a movie set was one environment. The movie could not be made unless each worker did their job. A farm — another environment — was chosen to grow food and a hospital were lives were at stake was chosen. Slowly, the environments moved towards the marvelous. The movie set was quite magical. Ana spent a long time costuming herself as the Countess and star of the "Scarry Movie" that was to be filmed that day. Jennifer, of Living Stage, became the monster from Brooklyn. Tina and Jeff were constructing a subplot about a married couple on the verge of a divorce. Brett cooked for everyone as John was supervising the building of the set. Kristin and Mark, our musician, sang and played at the piano. Later on, the Countess began to sing with great flourish. Ana had developed her character into a histrionic Russian actress who danced everything she said. As she sang short phrases of songs, Mark picked up on the piano and the other children around the room began to sing with her as they worked. The room bubbled. Meanwhile, Mickey, the producer, decided to change "Scary Movie" to "Lone Movie." She thought it would make more money. No one protested (except the monster from Brooklyn) and the atmosphere transformed. The set was reorganized by John's crew and in no time Jeff and Tina had the first scenes ready and expanded into an audience participation drama.

Within each environment, especially those unfamiliar to the children (such as the movie set or the scientific exploration ship) much information about these fields of interest and what goes on there and how things work, was communicated. On the movie set Mickey and Oran (Living Stage actor) talked about marketing and finances. Robbie worked with Kent (Living Stage actor) on cameras and imagery. On the exploratory ship, we talked about anthropology and archeology and how scientists do their work. In the sea port environment, we dealt with industry, pollution, and war. The children absorbed the information very readily and very often a child would maintain a character through several environments and carry over information from one environment to another as the characters' lives grew richer and richer. Rajeev was a doctor in the hospital environment. When we did the exploratory ship, he wanted to be a fish and still be a doctor so he became Dr. Fish who took care of fish. In a garage environment, he was Dr. Fish having car trouble.

The environments gave Brett a chance at something she craved: human contact. Brett was a child in a similar position as Laura's. She had no playmates at home. But, different from Laura, Brett wanted very much to play. Teachers complained that she was disruptive in class. Her mother was concerned that, when she came into contact with other children, she "smothered" them with her need to be with them. We were concerned with helping her fulfil her need. In the early weeks, Brett was impatient with our performance segment of the workshop. She chatted loudly with whomever she could engage. Sometimes she broke through the scene and asked us questions unrelated to the subject matter of the scene. We did not try to restrain Brett physically. This had been done both in class and at home and had not worked. Other children were growing in the work and wanted to play as soon as they came into the room. With this as support for making the decision, we changed our format so that we performed at the end of the workshop and the children came into an open environment without having to sit and lose energy. This change delighted Brett tremendously. She lept for a costume, set up her playing area and announced thunderously who she was while inviting others to play with her. It was clear that the turnabout was indeed fair play, for in giving her a chance to affect the environment and use her energy more effectively, she was ready for other work.

One of these other areas proved to be an exciting new one: poetry. We all sat together one day, after playing hard for over an hour, and wrote poetry. I sat with Brett as she listened to Jennifer's explanation of poetry as an expression of the heart that can be put down in any form. It doesn't have to rhyme, nor have a set number of lines. Brett burst into song and asked me to write it down as her poem:

I love you in me
I love you in me
I love you in me
I love you in me
Sometimes
I'm fire, mad, happy, sad, scared monster
I love you in me.

-Brett Minor-

While the environments were the springboard for many discoveries, other areas of work saw powerful creative explosions. One warmup exercise became a recurring theme. Conductor is an exercise designed to develop the ability to express a given emotion in a strong physical form using the body and the voice. To these children, it was a welcome change from struggling with their verbal skills. They would choose a feeling and without saying what it was, they would begin to express it in sound or movement. The other children would then respond to their sounds with movement or to their movements with sounds as though they were both emanating from the same body. The children on the cirlce were then asked what feeling they had as they responded to the person in the middle. The children loved this game and wanted to do it each week; however, their vocabulary that expressed emotion was limited: happy, sad, mad, scared, and crying. After doing these emotions repeatedly, their enthusiasm began to wane. We introduced them to new words: excited, nervous, lonely, frustrated, joy, etc. The process slowly expanded until the children were communicating their responses by telling stories of what was happening to the person in the middle to make them move in the way they were moving. The stories excited the child in the middle and s/he moved more vigorously to encompass the story's action. This gave rise to a new form. One child would choose an emotion and begin to move with it until a story was created by one. The child with the story would tell the story. The child in the center moved abstractly to the story and they wove the story together.

Ana told one story to Melissa's movement. "She is a lady who is happy that she just got bitten by a dog 'cause she wanted to die. Now she is getting her killing shirt on and going to buy a cloud. Now she is dead. She is happy."

This form, that the children created, was a clear illustration of what Kahil Gibran said about art: "Art is a mist carried into an image." This dialogue in fantasy was almost a trademark of this group. Sometimes we would spend as much as forty minutes working through an ending to one of our improvised scenes. One child would give an ending and another child would respond to that — not as an argument or to disagree, but as collaboration. They were stimulated by each other's artisitic visions, by what each other said. Then another ending and another would be created.

We were careful to give them their breadth in these discussions of human issues and we felt sure that there was no other time that they could have a dialogue in this way with each other in an atmosphere of respect.

So together they had created their own culture — a culture where Jeff could roll his limitless body across the floor to stroke his girlfriend Tina's cheek with his toe; where Brett could express her love; where Laura could take her time; whre Kristen and John could feel repsect for their love for each other; where Ana was as beautiful outside as she felt inside despite her facial anomalies; where all of us shone in our best light — the only real light to see anyone by. It was clear that these children were not "handicapped." It was the world outside that was crippled by not opening itself up to this beauty.

SHARPE HEALTH SCHOOL

Washington, D.C.

1980-81 EVALUATION

By Rebecca Rice
Associate Director
Living Stage Theatre Company

Get on board
Get on board
The friendship train
Where no two people are the same
I am I, You are you
That's what makes our friendship true
Choo choo choo, choo choo choo
Woo Woo! (Train whistle sound)

This joyful tune that was created especially for these beautiful young people became the signature tune of the year and the song that ended each session as the children actually formed the friendship train. They helped each other with crutches, braces, wheelchairs, walkers and various motor difficulties. They sang loud and strong as they moved the train out of our playing space and off to lunch.

This helping, this singing, this dancing, this overcoming obstacles to perfect the creative act, this working together to do what seemed impossible, this joy became the signature quality of the work with these children all year.

The Sharpe Health group set up some particularly strong challenges for our company of five actors, one musician and three production assistants. They had a wide range of disabilities (various kinds of involvement from Cerebral Palsy and Spina Bifida, Down Syndrome, Arthrogryposis, Meningitis, and Myelomenigocele). Five to seven of the 13 children needed one-to-one attention to ensure their contribution and movement in the group. Two out of these seven needed constant (hands-on) one-to-one contact. Five children were in wheelchairs. The other children were ambulatory with walkers and braces or by crawling, and we all had to fit into a small classroom space.

As people, their energies were vastly different and unique. There was Lakesha, omnipotent and domineering, who stood behind her walker, mistress of all she surveyed. There was Chuckie, whose singing, dancing celebration of life left no one untouched. Nicole, who has had a two-year struggle with physical pain and emotional self-assertion, became a silent heroine for all of us as we watched her struggle bear fruit. Chantale's name was her inner life. She could turn anything into a song or a ritualized dance. Her brother in ritual dancing was Eric. Together they filled the room with shadows of other cultures or other worlds. Michelle's soft, quiet quality was like a flower that saved its powerful inner beauty for those who took the time to look inside. Marc, affable and unassuming, patiently became a musician right before our eyes. Bobetta could truly be called "Mother Courage" as she struggled with a crippling bone disease that eliminated the use of her hands when in her heart she wanted to play piano and percussion. Deon and Delonte's bounding, charging energies were always the catalysts that began every endeavor with a great forward motion. Ann Marie was characterized by her clear sense of independence. No matter how much time it took to do something or what the difficulty was, she had to do it herself with pride and joy. Lorenzo, soft, silent and hesitant, lived in a private world that he opened just a bit to us to let his light out. Kelly seemed to live in a world of painful confusion— a world in which a touch meant everything. In Living Stage, she was touched a lot.

In order for this Friendship Train to become airborne, it was necessary to blend the different elements into a well-oiled machine without disturbing the nature of each individual part. In order to achieve this delicate balance, each actor had to be able to communicate one idea or set of instructions at least 13 different ways. Deon and Delonte must be set into motion immediately. Nicole and Michelle must be told quietly and directly and then encouraged and reassured. Ann Marie needs instructions repeated slowly and many times. Lakesha is self-starting and independent. This type of individualized attention fosters an atmosphere of reverence and trust. Each child feels important. Each actor feels challenged and well used. Order, not chaos, prevails.

One person is not charged with the responsibility of all this communication all the time; but, one actor serves as the leader for each day. The other actors stay closely attuned to the leader's objectives and to the type of atmosphere that she/he wants to establish. The leader, then, is like the body of the octopus and the other actors are the tentacles. The leader may change the mood without notice and each actor must respond immediately and root themselves in this change.

In one session, Jennifer was the leader. She established that, for the first 1½ hours, we would all create characters that were members of the same family and that the family was preparing to move from their house to a new place. As the children entered, we engaged them in this play using costume pieces and imaginary objects. As we worked and talked of life within our family, the children were very concentrated and the environment was established strongly. Then suddenly, Jennifer broke through the play to annouce that we were actually moving to another planet via a spaceship and that it would take years to get there. Her intention was to expand the play beyond an everyday reality and into something more fantastical that would open up more possibilities.

The children responded with great excitement. The production assistants zeroed in on the boxes and materials that comprise our set, moving them into a new arrangement that created a spaceship. While some actors remained as their family characters, others transformed into characters that sprang from the new environment. I changed into a solar wind which triggered Eric to change into the King of the Wind. Our musician, Mark, changed his music and character into an outer space orchestra which set Chantale into singing and Marc (the child) into playing large block chords on the piano.

These kinds of transformations were essential to our relationship with these children. Their energies, attention spans, and response levels were so different, it was easy for chaos to creep in. And, rather than demand that they hide their feelings of boredom or frustration, or that we resort to harsh discipline, we allowed their need for change to affect the environment and transform it into something unexpected and with renewed possibilities. And, since transformation is the essence of creativity, workers in a creative environment must search for the seeds of change as with metal detectors on a beach, water these seeds, invite them to grow and then ride them like transports into the unknown. For a true artist, the unknown is exciting, not terrifying.

We have worked at Sharpe Health for four years and the atmosphere in the workshops has been unique, indeed, rarefied, and at times has seemed almost tribe-like. It is a true experiment as we continually change our format to suit their burgeoning creativity. Early in the year we would begin by performing for them, then doing creative work with their bodies such as movement to music that expressed their own inner lives or the inner lives of other characters and objects, or asking them to create body sculptures that expressed strong feelings that sprang from their awareness, dreams and frustrations. This was followed by the creation of characters to participate together in an environment. We call this "open play." In our performances, we improvised a scene on a theme that we felt was a strong issue in the lines (i.e. friendship, parents, independence, fantasy). We would bring the scene to a heightened moment of conflict and then freeze the actors in motion. The children were then asked to create the ending, each from their own feelings, with an emphasis that each person was right in what they felt. We would then combine these endings into a whole and invite a few of the children to join us in playing the ending out. As time went on, the children became remarkably adept in verbalizing and playing out these endings. Children who were not included as characters began creating more and more important characters in order to be included. The need to be included gave rise to marvelous character choices. Some became animals. Others became rugs, tables, forks, spoons, rain, lightbulbs, and fire engines. We began freezing the scenes at earlier points and bringing more and more characters in until the scenes became mini-environments. This gave rise to a new way of introducing the "open play" for the day. Rather than giving verbal instructions or always pre-determining, we would improvise a strong situation that could then grow and go through many different changes. In one such scene, I became a disabled girl who did not want my mother to do everything for me and most of all, I didn't want her to always worry about me when I was out of her sight. I left the house one day to find my grandmother's house by myself. I got lost. The freeze was, "What should I do?"

The children wanted many things. "The girl should get spanked." "She should find someone to help her." "She should die." "Her mother should die." "She gets to her grandmother's and has a party,"and so on. We allowed each child to assume a character from their ending and, as the girl continued on her journey, the world opened up and she found terror, delight, new friends, obstacles and adventure. This scene led to an environment that lasted one hour.

These deliberate and evolutionary changes in format gave all of us a chance to see each child in a kind of framed light as each change would work better for some than for others. As time went on, it became less and less necessary to work out a detailed pre-determined agenda. As the children owned the work, more and more they would come in with their ideas and impulses already in motion and we simply wove them into a cohesive whole that enabled characters, such as a nurse who was also a cockroach (Marc), and a fearful, motherless raincloud (Michelle), to find a relationship between each other. Also, with their creativity flowing independely there was less need for us to be directly involved in their relationships with each other. This gave them the chance to develop their own play together, far beyond the limitations of the normal teasing and competitive playground play.

Lakesha and Marc (child) had a marriage that grew out of both of them wanting to play the piano. They played and each made up their own songs; but, somehow their song styles did not blend. Many fights erupted. Lakesha yelled at Marc to shut-up and told him he couldn't sing. Marc ignored her and turned up the volume on the piano so as not to hear her. They played and fought and sang through several sessions until Marc finally announced that they were getting a divorce. Still the fighting went on until one day, without anyone seeing exactly how it happened, Lakesha was married to Chuckie who announced his love by singing to her (away from the piano) and bringing her flowers. He called her "honey," and "dear," and kissed her hand until she absolutely melted in sweet smiles.

Bobetta replaced Lakesha at the piano and she and Marc yelled instantly. Bobetta was not too happy with her lyrics or singing, but she loved Marc's and cheered whever he came up with a new song. He helped her overcome a seemingly impossible problem. Her hands being virtually useless he, he held them while she used her shoulder muscles to force her arm to hit her hand on the keys. Later, when he got tired of holding her hand, she started literally "using her head" to pound out chords. She also tried to use her shoulder or a stick held in her mouth to play the keys.

A very interesting relationship developed between Chantale, Ann Marie Kelly, Nicole and myself. All of them had speech difficulties that caused them to be slow in responding. They were quiet (except for Chantale's bursts of song) and working with objects was a laborious process. I ran interference for them by keeping the faster-paced children from disrupting their play. I constantly translated what was going on elsewhere in the environment into simpler language or into large, physical poems that they could deal with more efficiently. I sat with them. I looked at them. I looked into them. I saw the intelligence moving. Slowly, the atmosphere thickened. Their world grew. They were soft with each other and very physical. They understood each other's language and each other's need for time. We sang a lot. We did many things that defy my ability to verbally describe. Maybe we made magic. Maybe we summoned secret worlds.

Nicole had a spirit that was larger than spastic quadriplegia would let her express comfortably; but, as her knowledge and ease with this work grew, it became seemingly imperative for her to make herself heard. She struggled getting out of her chair to move more freely in the space. She gasped for air and yelled her choices and her demands and made her presence known.

It may have been incorrect to call only Bobetta "Mother Courage." It would be more complete to say that they are all "Children of Courage." Every child in this group made great strides in their creativity discoveries and creativity gives birth to pride and self-worth by increasing functioning on all levels and opening up new doors in the externally imposed limitation on the world of the disabled. For attitudes are changed on both sides. We learned as they learned. Observers who entered our space continually reacted with astonishment as they saw these children doing things that they were thought to be incapable of and expressing feelings that they were not aware were inside of them. And pride comes not only from self-accomplishment, but also from the knowledge that you have affected others by your presence and your work. And, if creativity has opened the pathways through which these children can give to this world, then the world is, through the results of their own efforts, a better place.

Get on board
Get on board
The friendship train
Where no two people are the same
I am I, You are you
That's what makes our friendship true
Choo choo choo, choo choo choo
Woo Woo!

II. SUMMARY STATEMENT

To briefly summarize, the BEH project represents significant innovations in three different areas: program approach, service/delivery model and evaluation design. The program approach is novel because it employs a method consisting of physical, vocal and verbal techniques usually employed to train actors to enhance the range of expressive possibilities available to severely orthopedically handicapped children. The service/delivery model is innovative in that it involves a unique integration of professional artistic staff with professional education staff. The evaluation component represents an innovation in that a model for evaluating programs delivering services of an artistic nature was researched and developed through the program.[10]

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[10] See Year End Report, 1979-80, Evaluation Section for detailed description of Panel Review Strategy.

APPENDIX A

Letters and Press Releases

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
6600 Kenilworth Avenue • Riverdale, Maryland 20840
(301) 277-2200

May 15, 1981

Mr. Bob Alexander
Arena State
6th and Maine Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Bob:

I am quite pleased that the workshop for teachers on May 9 went well, and was most happy and appreciative of your large part in it. The participants evaluations at the end of the day rated your workshop very highly and said they had a most stimulating and exciting time.

I would be very interested in working with you in future arrangements for workshops etc., with teachers and/or other groups. We are all in need of that wonderful voice of support for imagination and the creative life, wherever it may be found.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Phyllis J. Henkelman
Exhibit Specialist

PJH:jh

CALVERT
PUBLIC LIBRARY
COUNTY
Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678 • 535-0291 • 855-6862

Katharine Hurrey
Director

Gary Vaughan
Assistant Administrator

May 2, 1981

Mr. Robert Alexander, Director
Living Stage
Arena Stage
6th and Maine Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Alexander:

Your presentation of the 'Living Stage' project, an Arena Stage outreach program for the handicapped, school age children, incarcerated persons, and older persons, was a revelation and inspiration to those attending the Calvert County(MD) Friends of the Library annual dinner meeting April 30th. That such a program could be of inestimable value came as a new thought to many. Several in the audience that I talked to at the conclusion of your presentation were enthusiastically considering ways to bring 'Living Stage' workshops to Calvert County through the schools, the Public Library, and the Senior Citizens Center. The consensus seemed to be that this is something that could be used to great advantage in the county which has its share of problems in dealing with the handicapped, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, etc.

Workshops such as you have conducted throughout the United States with such tangible results can only be successful under the direction of someone like yourself who has the necessary expertise and experience. To make these persons into useful citizens should be one of the primary concerns and responsibilities of the Federal government by providing funds for this type of program. The cost is infinitesimal compared to the cost of supporting these people through welfare programs.

My very best wishes for the continued success of'Living Stage.' I do hope that Calvert County will be able to benefit from one or more of your workshops in the near future.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Nelda P. Drennan

Vice-President
Calvert County Friends
of the Library

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: The Living Stage Theatre Co.
DATE: May 1, 1981
CONTACT: Martha Vinograd (202) 554-9066

LIVING STAGE WORKSHOPS IN HAWAII AND MYRTLE BEACH

Robert Alexander, Director of Arena Stage's outreach arm, The Living Stage Theatre Company, has scheduled visits in May to three locations across the country to present workshops for artists and educators.

The purpose of the workshops is to offer specialized training in the use of improvisational theatre techniques with disabled children to educators and artists. Director Alexander believes that, in order to revere and nurture the creative process in children, we must first experience the process ourselves.

"We are deeply committed to the belief that all children - whether disabled or not - have the wondrous potential for creative genius," says Alexander. "We are traveling because we have a strong desire to see the artists and educators in other communities become aware and convinced of the importance of the creative process to the lives of disabled children. We want them to give these children such an opportunity."

Funds for the workshops are coming from Living Stage's three-year model grant from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, Office of Education, which allows them to travel across the country to offer master workshops for dissemination and replication.

The three workshops are extensions of last year's lecture/demonstrations which disseminated information about Living Stage's innovative programs in cities throughout America. The workshop schedules and locations are:

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C.
May 2 10a-5:30p
Coastal Carolina Univ.
Arts Commission
Coordinated by Frank McNutt, Director of the Arts in Schools Program
(803) 758-3442

MAUI, HAWAII
May 23-24
Coordinated by Joan Kelly Lessin
P.O. Box 1223
Wailuku, HI 96793
(808) 244-4103

OAHU, HAWAII
May 30-31
Coordinated by Tom Larsen
Chair, Hawaii State Theatre Council
2026 Alaeloa St.
Honolulu, HI 96821
(808) 737-2564

Living Stage is partially supported by grants from The National Endowment for the Arts and the D.C. Commission for the Arts and Humanities.

# # #

South Carolina Arts Commission
1800 Gervais Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201
Telephone (803) 758-3442

April 13, 1981

Wendy Haynes
The Living Stage Theatre Company
6th and Maine Street
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Ms. Haynes:

The South Carolina Arts Commission is sponsoring a one day workshop featuring the progressive improvisational techniques of Mr. Robert Alexander, Director of the "Living Stage" of Washington, DC. Mr. Alexander will share the rewards of his recent work with handicapped children in the Washington area. Bob's thirty-five years of theatrical experience have resulted in the development of an improvisational technique that allows persons of any level and ability to participate in the exhilerating magic of creative work.

Please join with us in exploring this process, and in so doing, expand the reaches of your own imagination. The workshop will be held on the second floor of the Student Activities Building, at Coastal Carolina, three miles south of Conway, on Highway #501, on May 2, beginning at 10:00 a.m. There is a $20.00 registration fee, which is tax deductable. If you decide to come, as we hope that you will, please wear clothes that you feel comfortable and able to move in, and bring a bag lunch with you.

For more information, please contact me at 758-7942, or Melvin Davis at 758-7810.

Please make check or money order payable to The South Carolina Arts Commission.

Hope to see you in May!

Sincerely,

Frank McNutt
Arts Coordinator

FKM/lsl
Enclosures

emerson college centennial
1880—1980

a century of excellence in communication

February 13, 1981

Wendy Haynes
6th & Maine Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Wendy,

The Childrens Theatre Department of Emerson College announces a two day workshop by Mr. Robert Alexander, Director of "Living Stage", Washington, D.C. In this particular workshop Bob will share his most recent work in theatre with handicapped children in the D.C. area. Bob brings 35 years of professional theatre experience to his work. The deep, caring, world-embracing, improvisational process he has developed, enables persons of every level of skill to participate in the magic/mystery/miracle of creative work.

Come explore the richness of this process and the complex beauty of your own imagination on April 11 (10AM-6PM) and April 12 (11AM-5PM). There will be a $20 registration fee which is tax deductable and participants are encouraged to attend both days.

For more information concerning the workshop, feel free to call me, at (617) 462-7568 evenings, or Dennis j. Parker, Childrens Theatre Office at Emerson at (617) 262-2010. Register early because space is limited. Please make checks or money orders payable to:

Living Stage
c/o Anna S. Clopton
Newburyport Childrens Theatre
189 High Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

Hope you join us in April!

Sincerely,

Anna Clopton

Anna S. Clopton
Director,
Newburyport Childrens Theatre

emerson college 148 beacon street boston, massachusetts 02116 (617) 262-2010

LIVING STAGE
THEATRE COMPANY
Robert Alexander, Director
6th & Maine Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024 Telephone: (202) 554-9066

a venture of
ARENA STAGE
Zelda Fichandler
Producing Director

February 2, 1981

ARENA'S LIVING STAGE THEATRE COMPANY TO VISIT MILWAUKEE

FEBRUARY 8 THROUGH 14

Living Stage Theatre Company, the outreach arm of Washington's Arena Stage, will take up residence in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from February 8 through 14, according to Robert Alexander, Director of the multi-racial improvisational performance company.

Living Stage is known throughout the United States for its groundbreaking work in bringing the artistic process and art of theatre to audiences who seldom, if ever, are exposed to live performances. Some of the disenfranchised audiences Living Stage has embraced over the past fifteen years are physically and mentally disabled children and adults, and the incarcerated, all of whom are encouraged to identify and use their own creative capabilities.

The one week Milwaukee residency will be undertaken at the invitation of Artreach Milwaukee, a new inter-disciplinary agency devoted to expanding arts participation beyond traditional audiences. Artreach-sponsored Living Stage activities will include work with mentally retarded youth and adults at Goodwill and a performance at the Ethan Allen School, a juvenile correctional facility. During the Milwaukee residency, Living Stage has also arranged a performance at the University of Wisconsin and a series of symposia for members of the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre Company and members of other professional groups, as well as students.

Although Living Stage works primarily in the national capital area, the

-over-company has toured extensively, with residencies in Connecticut, Arizona, and Indiana, and demonstration workshops in California, Massachusetts, and Hawaii.

"It is very gratifying to help bring the strength and joy of the artistic process to disabled and imprisoned people in Milwaukee," said Robert Alexander. "We are pleased that a city in the Midwest would call on us, a thousand miles away, to help them reach their neediest citizens and to help them train a group of concerned artists who hope to see this type of work flourish and grow in the Milwaukee area."

Arena Stage's Living Stage Theatre Company is supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts; the Bureau of Early Education for the Handicapped, Department of Education; the Favrot Foundation; and, many private individuals in the community.

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Contact: Martha Vinograd
Director of Development
Living Stage Theatre Company
(202) 554-9066

JVS

Jewish Vocational Service

1339 NORTH MILWAUKEE STREET
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53202
(414) 272-1344

NORMAN M. GERBER, Ph.D., Executive Director

February 20, 1981

Barbara Fisher
Milwaukee Artreach
161 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203

Dear Barbara:

On Thursday and Friday, February 12 and 13, 1981, I attended a workshop conducted by the Living Stage Theatre Company from Washington, D.C. I understand that Milwaukee Artreach is responsible for bringing this wonderful company to our town.

Spending time with the Living Stage was one of the most exhilerating and educational experiences of my professional career. The company's warmth, talents and willingness to share themselves created an atmosphere which allowed and encouraged the participants to explore their creative and imaginative energies. It became magically obvious how the exercises in which we were involved could be used in our individual professional roles.

I wish to express my gratitude to Milwaukee Artreach and the Living Stage Company for providing an environment which enhanced my personal and professional growth.

Sincerely,

Su Marshall

Su. Marshall,
Counselor/Program Supervisor

SM:lw

cc. Betsy Rice
Living Stage Theatre Company

International Year of Disabled Persons

CASPER BUILDING 263 North Jackson Street · Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202 · 276 6622
SOUTHEAST CAMPUS 109 West Wilbur Avenue · Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53207 · 481 6336
SOUTHWEST CAMPUS 6015 West Forest Home Avenue · Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53220 · 545 8080
SCHOOL WORK SERVICES 2638 North Jackson Street · Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202 · 276 6622
WORK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 1339 North Milwaukee Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202 · 272 1344
PLACEMENT SERVICES 536 West Wisconsin Avenue, Sixth Floor · Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203 · 273 0444
[illegible] 271 3844

MS. BELLA H. SELAN
2400 EAST BRADFORD AVE.
APT. 407
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53211

2/12/81

Dear Mike and John:

The reason I write you today is because Eunice told me of the foundation for small theatre groups you are starting or have started. I have run across the most unusual theatre experience in my life: a group out of Washington, D.C. where they are affiliated with the Arena Stage and I think they have evolved from Circle in the Square also. In any case, the troupe is called Living Stage Theatre--I just spent 3 wonderful days in a workshop with them. The primarily work with children, prisoners, and other "different" groups in our population. Their artistic standards are extremely high and they relate to each other in the same respectful and non-threatening manner in which they interact with their audiences. As you know, I have worked with the retarded and elderly population myself and have done some theatrical things with them, but my knowledge has been expanded enormously just by watching what Living Stage accomplished with them here. There was a private foundation grant which an organization named Artreach got to have them come here and work with all sorts of human services personnel to try and teach them their ways of working. They have really affected this realistic and hardboiled old lady profoundly, and I am not easily affected. The reason they got to me was that they are not phonies. They put their money where their mouths are. The director of this venture is Bob Alexander who has been running the direction of this group for 15 years. They have created a world which does not exist for many of us--and it shows in their children who were along: contented, well taken care of, and very creatively happy while we were busy with their parents. In one word,Mike and John, they are not phony. If they were the slightest bit phony, I would have rejected the entire emotional experience.

The reason I write you this is that if you have your foundation in shape to make grants, I can think of no theatre group that deserves your support more. Not only do they perform for what they call the "forgotten people" in our world, their artistry and integrity is overwhelming. Bob Alexander will be getting in touch with you and I hope you can lend him support. By the way, they also work with alcohol and drug-addicted persons. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend a show they do at U.W.M. on drug-addiction as I will leave town for a few days today.

I trust that you both are doing well on top of your hill, that you are happy and writing--and please let me hear from you.

Lots of Love,

Bella

FROM A LETTER TO LIVING STAGE THEATRE COMPANY FROM BELLA SELAN:

"Thanks to you again for that wonderful three days. You had no way of knowing that everything I did these three days is the antithesis of what I usually show the world. I grew up in Nazi Germany (a Jew then, although I never knew it til Hitler came along), went through the Holocaust, and made up my mind that nothing can ever get close enough again so that I would miss it when it goes away. Until this week, I almost succeeded. Although there are some very important people in my life, I have structured my feelings so that, should they be out of it, I survive without showing the pain. What you have done for me is to tell me that it is ok to show how you feel--that you are even stronger than if you don't. For that, I thank you."

February 20, 1981

Dear Barbara,

A note of thanks to you at Artreach Milwaukee for making possible a truly exciting, learning experience through Bob Alexander and his Living Stage company. I have participated in many improvisational and creative drama workshops in the past, but this one surpassed them all.

I'm looking forward to sharing the ideas and techniques I learned with other Girl Scouts of Milwaukee area adults and girls.

Thanks again for providing this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Virginia Michaels

Virginia Michaels

P.S. If there is any way that I can serve Artreach Milwaukee with what I have learned, please feel free to contact me at 421-3793.

GOODWILL REHABILITATION CENTER
6055 N. 91st Street • Milwaukee, WI 53225 • Phone: (414) 353-6400

February 12, 1981

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A.D. Robertson
Mrs. G.T. Stephenson III
Edward S. Tallmadge
Richard D. Wilson
Charles F. Wright

Robert Alexander
Living Stage
6th & M Street SW
Washington, D. C.

Dear Bob:

I am writing to thank you for having your company conduct a workshop here February 9, 10 and 11th. I was very fortunate to have been able to participate in the workshop along with other Milwaukee artists, teachers and therapists. It was a very insightful and energizing experience. The clients that I work with here at Goodwill were very moved and excited about their participation as well.

I speak for myself, Rex and Carolyn in extending an invitation to you and your company to return to our agency.

Bob, thank you again for the work that you and your company are doing. It is such a special talent to be able to break into some of those barriers of inhibition and allow people a glimpse into a world beyond disability.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Corcoran

Kathryn Corcoran

KC:im

Remember Goodwill in YOUR will

Accredited by Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

February 20, 1981

Hello Paul!

I thought I'd drop you a line to let you know how great the Living Stage workshops were for me. As a independent contractor in this improvisational form of theater, I felt especially fortunate to have the opportunity to work with these exciting, talented and generous people.

Without your original idea to get them here coupled with, I'm sure, hours and days of hard work, this simply would not have happened.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for the working professionals in this field as well as the community at large. As they say...

Love and Courage,

Chris Keene

Chris Keene

February 20, 1981

Helloooooooooooo

again!!!

Bob, Rebecca, Kaia, Kent, Jennifer,
Oran, Mark

I wanted to say how very, very, very, very, very, muchmuchmuchmuch I savored and treasured our time together. It was truly a "shot in the heart and soul" for me, especially working as a solo in this field.

I have had time to reflect on what happened as well as read the articles you left behind (excellent) and I still feel your warmth and strength. It's time to fire my own creativity and I credit you folks with providing a much needed spark. Thank you!

Love and Courage
to you all

Chris Keane

Actor Who Participated in
Living Stage Theatre Company
Performance, Milwaukee Residency,
February 8-14, 1981

P.S. Please send me info. on your summer workshops.

DANCECIRCUS LTD.

3401 W. National Ave.
Milwaukee, WI. 53215
414-383-3355

February 13, 1981

Artreach Milwaukee
161 W. Wisconsin
Suite 7011
Milwaukee, WI 53203

TO ALL OF YOU!

We just wanted to write a short note to thank Artreach for bringing Living Stage to Milwaukee.

Words can't quite do justice to the magnificent effect those people have. We learned more in three days about the unlimited potential in all of us than we ever could ever have imagined.

Living Stage is simply wonderful. We applaud Artreach's sponsorship and would love to have them come again.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

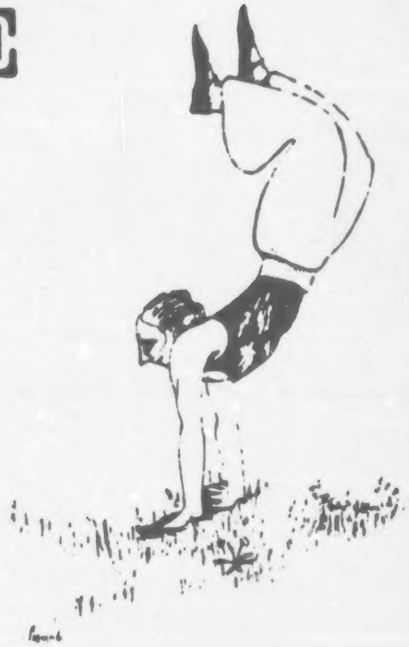
Betty Salamun Cate Deicher Kathryn Potter

Betty Salamun Cate Deicher Kathryn Potter

FRIENDS MIME THEATRE

P.O. box 92127
Milwaukee,
WI. 53202

(414)271·8484



2/17/81

Dear Paul and the Artreach Staff,

We would like to thank Artreach so very much for the opportunity to work with the Living Stage February 12th and 13th. The experience was a highly positive one for the whole company--reinforcing many of our own ideas, techniques and philosophy, and stimulating discussion and experimentation in new directions.

We look forward to continuing our work with special audiences with renewed energy.

Yours Sincerely,

Barbara Leigh

Barbara Leigh,
Artistic Co-ordinator, FMT

Education Program
JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
Washington, D.C. 20566 (202)872-0466

December 4, 1980

Robert Alexander, Director
LIVING STAGE
6th and M Streets, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Alexander:

I do want to thank you again for leading the workshop in creative expression on Saturday, October 11 for our Arts Education workshop participants. The response we received from the participants was extraordinary. They indicated that the workshop was a most enriching and stimulating experience, providing an opportunity both for personal and professional development.

Besides the overwhelming response of the participants, the tremendous number of requests for this workshop indicates to us that there is a great demand for the type of work you are doing. We are therefore looking forward to the possibility of working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

R. Virginia Rogers

R. Virginia Rogers
Education Coordinator

**National Education/
Alliance for Arts Education
Committee**

Mrs. Jean Kennedy Smith, *Chairperson*
Mrs. Howard H. Baker, Jr., *Vice-Chairperson*
James Allison
Vivienne Anderson
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Jack W. Kukuk, *Director of Education*

Education Program

Jack W. Kukuk, *Director of Education*
Alliance for Arts Education
Arts Coalition Northwest
American College Theatre Festival
Programs for Children and Youth

A Cooperative Program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Department of Education

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
WASHINGTON. D.C. 20202

August 26, 1980

Mr. Robert Alexander
Director, Living Stage
6th & Maine Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Bob:

Thank you for your letter forwarding the evaluations made by Rebecca Rice of your staff on the work being done at Fairhill School in Fairfax, Virginia and Sharpe Health School in Washington, D.C. I enjoyed reading about the good efforts of the Living Stage in tapping the creative potential of these children.

I look forward to the meeting and sharing those things we both value in this work and, I am most appreciative of your kind words and wishes.

Sincerely,

Edwin W. Martin
Assistant Secretary for Special
Education and Rehabilitative Services

University of the
District of Columbia

GEORGIA HARVARD CAMPUS
2565 Georgia Avenue N. W.
Washington, D. C.

College of Education and Human Ecology

July 23, 1980

Mrs. Wendy Haynes
2109 Hanover Street
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mrs. Haynes:

The participants and staff of the A Team Approach to Counseling and Assessing Special Education Needs Workshop appreciate the very thorough presentation you made on Arts and the Educationally Handicapped. We are cognizant of the tremendous amount of time obviously spent on the coordination and preparation for this session and we appreciate the wealth of information and materials shared with us. Your discussion was particularly enlightening and will aid the workshop participants in actions and planning for their work settings.

Your session was evaluated by the workshop participants and rated "excellent".

You are cordially invited to the presentation of the certificates to the workshop participants August 1, 1980 at 1:00. We do hope that you will be able to attend.

Thank you for your continued support of the University community. We look forward to working with you again.

Sincerely,

Anita L. Hughes

Anita L. Hughes
Coordinator

Barbara L. Smith

Barbara L. Smith
Interim Dean, COEHE

ALH/tmj

LIVING STAGE
Robert Alexander, Director

a venture of
ARENA STAGE
Zelda Fichandler
Producing Director

6th & Maine Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024 Telephone (202) 554-9066

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL, 1980

EXPERT ON IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE FOR PHYSICALLY DISABLED TO LECTURE IN SAN FRANCISCO ON APRIL 9

Washington -- Robert Alexander, director of Living Stage--Arena Stage's nationally acclaimed improvisational theatre company--will give a lecture/demonstration on "improvisational theatre for physically disabled children" on April 9 at 3:30 p.m. at San Francisco's Louise Lombard School, 700 Font Boulevard.

The lecture/demonstration, which will be attended by the faculty of the San Francisco State University and members and interns of the Council for Exceptional Children, has been arranged to disseminate information about a model H.E.W. program now being developed by LIVING STAGE, and to offer previews of a master workshop in improvisational theatre to be offered by Mr. Alexander in San Francisco in 1981.

LIVING STAGE is a small, multi-racial improvisational theatre company which was founded in 1966 as the community outreach arm of Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage. LIVING STAGE exists solely to take theatre to the forgotten people--the incarcerated, the aged, youth and children.

In 1978, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped awarded LIVING STAGE a three year pilot grant to expand its work with physically disabled

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Theater for Children and Youth • Teacher Training Programs • Improvisational Theater Workshops • Educational Consultants for Theaters, Schools and Museums

children, ages 4 to 8. In weekly workshops, the company uses improvisational theatre techniques to awaken creativity and enhance imaginative communication. Through sound, movement, music and creative play, the children are encouraged to explore their potential for creativity and to stretch beyond the physical limitations of their disabilities.

A limited number of spaces at the April 9 lecture/demonstration are available to special educators and/or people in the field of handicapped services.

For additional information, contact:

Dr. Steveann Auerbach, Director
Institute for Childhood Resources
1169 Howard Street
San Francisco, California 94103

Phone: (415) 864-1169

-30-

9200 [illegible]
Annandale, Va
April 4, 1980

Dear Mr Alexander,

This is just a short note to Thank you for the terrific work that you and your staff from Living Stage are doing with our Children at Fairhill Center.

I know our son, Gary looks forward to it every Monday and comes home singing or more talkative with a certain glow shining through. Your bringing disabled adults in to meet with the Children is a fantastic idea and have really made an impact on Gary.

We really feel fortunate to have Gary in your program.

Sincerely,
Myra Gunds

Weve

March 15, 1980

Dear Mr. Alexander.

For the past school year my daughter Melissa has participated in Living Stage every Monday afternoon at Fairhill School. I think it has been one of the best experiences Melissa ever has had. We regard the program very highly and hope it is continued.

There has been an excellent carry-over to home – Melissa has a very vivid imagination and Living Stage has certainly helped develop and nuture it. Melissa improvises at home and somehow gets us all involved. I feel it has also helped to improve her self-image.

I think bringing a disabled adult helps the child visualize himself as an adult and maybe think of some alternatives or options. It is reassuring for parents to see a disabled adult "making it" in the world. We sometimes impose limitations on our children.

Thank you for everything you have done for Melissa.

Sincerely,
Jane Toomey

Febru. 7, 1980

Mr. Robert Alexander
th + Maine Avenue, S.W.
ashington, D.C. 20024

ear Mr. Alexander:

The Living Stage, which Martha attends
n Mondays from 1:30 to 3:30, has helped her
o mature enormously. She is attempting speech
ow, and tries to start conversations! Last
ear she would just smile and point.

The idea of bringing in a handicapped
ult, Mr. Henry Holden, to speak to the
hildren and demonstrate how well he has
one socially and as an actor was a great
dea. Martha told her sisters about last
Monday's meeting, both in speech and sign.
The other children were excited to have
someone they could identify with, and I think
the session really raised their spirits.

If it is at all possible, please do this
gain. These children need such demonstrations.

Sincerely,
Maurina Hutchison
3011 Strathmeade St.
Falls Church, Va. 22042

APPENDIX B

Articles

Star-Bulletin
Today
Features
Entertainment
Honolulu Monday, July 13, 1981

When You Wish Upon a Stage...

By Susan Yim
Star-Bulletin Writer

> *Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die,*
> *Life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.*
>
> **—Langston Hughes**

ROBERT Alexander likes to talk about dreams, quote Langston Hughes and teach people how to make their dreams come alive. Alexander is founder and director of Living Stage, an 11-year-old Washington acting company that doesn't wait for an audience to come to it. It takes theater to the people.

Living Stage includes five professional actors who can sing, dance and act—and who would be doing their stuff on Broadway or television—if they hadn't bumped into Alexander.

The 52-year-old Alexander got into theater when he was 17 and had dreams of performing on Broadway. Eventually he found more satisfaction as a director of children's theater on the East Coast. Then he got the idea for Living Stage.

Alexander is a small, wiry, leprechaun-like man who operates on high all the time. During an interview he gestured, leaned forward, expressed himself with his body as much as he did with words. In a way, this is what Living Stage does—the actors express with their bodies and words the stories told to them by the children, prisoners, handicapped youngsters and senior citizens they perform with.

The company has performed in Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia schools, prisons and recreation centers. They travel in a converted bus which also transports props and costumes, and bring with them what Alexander calls activist

born as artists, we're capable of doing what I described. We have a strong need to do that. Birds fly, fish swim, human beings think and create. When learning, thinking, creating is denied, then you go crazy. People (in today's society) aren't encouraged to write poetry, to express themselves. It's a death culture.

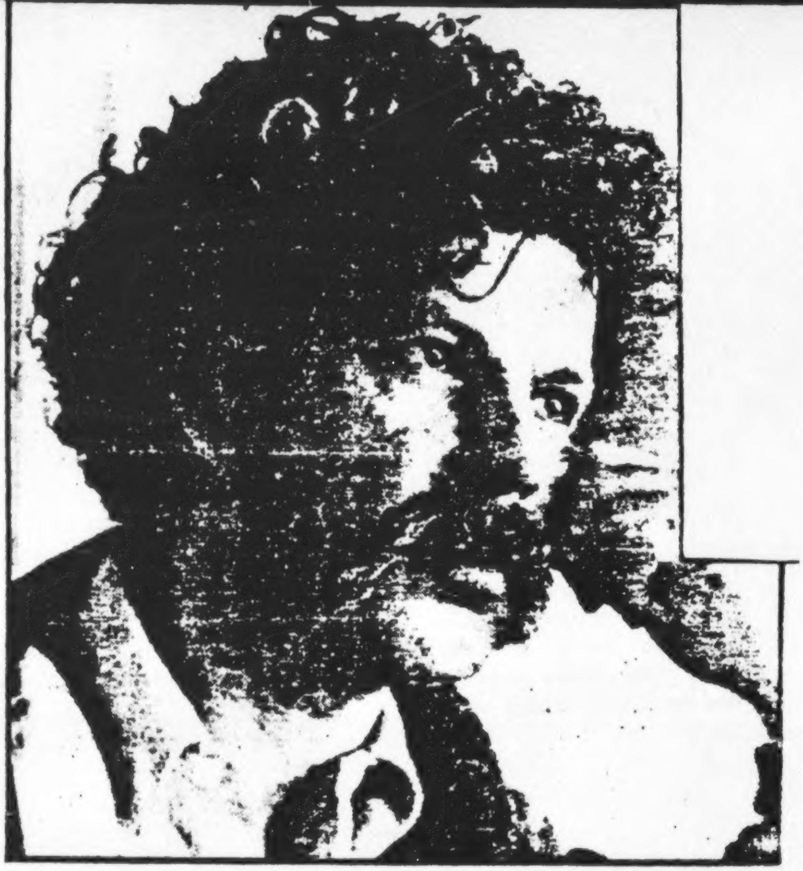
"SO WE GAVE BIRTH to a thea-

sters how to act, help them to write a play and produce it—if they get enough funding.

Tom Larson, president of the Hawaii Theatre Council, which is working with the city Office of Human Resources on the project, is trying to raise funds for the program.)

Living Stage usually performs to small groups of people—a class

By Susan Yim
Star-Bulletin Writer



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The company has performed in Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia schools, prisons and recreation centers. They travel in a converted bus which also transports props and costumes, and bring with them what Alexander calls activist theater or participatory theater—the audience at the end of the day has danced, sung and acted side by side with Living Stage actors.

For the first time, handicapped children, prisoners, the elderly, adolescents are told they are artists.

"We want to allow the participants emotionally, sensorily, intellectually, kinesthetically to finally know that they are artists," said Alexander. "I want them to experience their artistry on all those levels and to learn that what they think and what they feel are very, very important to this society. It's to validate their imagination.

"There is an artist in every child, woman, man who has the instinct or urge to communicate how they feel as human beings on planet Earth. When we're born, we're born as artists, we're capable of doing what I described. We have a strong need to do that. Birds fly, fish swim, human beings think and create. When learning, thinking, creating is denied, then you go crazy. People (in today's society) aren't encouraged to write poetry, to express themselves. It's a death culture.

"SO WE GAVE BIRTH to a theater company, from a thirst to create environments to allow people to express themselves as artists.

"I always felt theater should deal with the deep concerns of humankind, the American disease of inarticulateness. It is very hard for people to articulate their needs," said Alexander, who was in Honolulu recently to conduct a workshop for members of the Hawaii State Theater Council. The idea being to teach them how to do here what Living Stage is doing in Washington.

(Among those at the workshop here were members of the Vaud Squad, six professional Island actors who will be a kind of "living stage" for 14- to 21-year-olds along the Waianae Coast this fall. The Vaud Squad will teach the youngsters how to act, help them to write a play and produce it—if they get enough funding.

Tom Larson, president of the Hawaii Theatre Council, which is working with the city Office of Human Resources on the project, is trying to raise funds for the program.)

Living Stage usually performs to small groups of people—a class rather than an entire school—so that everyone can get on stage and play a role. The groups are always homogeneous in age. The youngest audience was 2½ years old; the oldest member of an audience was 103.

over

Robert Alexander and Living Stage members conduct a workshop: 'There is an artist in every child, woman, man who has the instinct or urge to communicate how they feel as human beings on planet Earth.'

A large number of audiences are prisoners. "There are a lot of men, women and children in prison," Alexander said, adding that the youngest prisoner he met was a 9-year-old boy. "Prisons are the nation's shame, how we don't take care of the young."

Whether prisoners, children or the elderly, Living Stage follows the same game plan. The company starts by selecting a theme—for a 13-year-old audience it might be "the courage to be yourself"—and singing as the audience enters the room. Next they teach the audience the song. From there the actors might recite a poem, one of 800 in the company's repertoire, or sing another song, one of 300 the company knows. In the midst of a song, Alexander will yell, "Freeze," and the actors will freeze like live sculptures, on their faces will be emotions triggered by the song or the poem. From here a scene is improvised.

"The characters in the scene are always the age of that audience," said Alexander. "Within five minutes we have to build to a climactic moment," and someone in the company yells, "Freeze," again. This time the audience is asked to suggest endings. The 13-year-old audience might be asked: What would you like to see happen. If you could dream of an ending what would it be?

THE AUDIENCE ISN'T always won over that quickly. "You walk into the center of 13 or 14 year olds and they might say, 'What are you talking about, man, what dreams?'"

But eventually *the Living Stage* bridges the gap, hits upon the right improvisation—a kid is being paddled by the principal when Alexander yells, "Freeze." What would the kids like to happen next?

A 13-year-old always has suggestions. One youngster suggests having the kid's mother tell the principal off, threaten to take the kid out of school and start a school of their own. Another kid says his mother would side with the principal.

"Light bulbs go off," in their heads, Alexander says. They realize things about themselves, about their parents, with a little guidance from Living Stage actors: Why do they pick on their younger brothers and sisters if they don't like being picked on by their older brothers and sisters? Did their parents go through the same things they are going through now?

Once the rapport is established what Alexander calls full theater begins. The audience begins to act out roles with the company.

"Young people don't have choices. They have to ask their parents, 'Can I go here? Can I go there? Can I stay at home? Can I have 15 cents to eat out?' In this theater they make their own choices, they pick characters. We are facilitators, we help them."

If the audience is 12 years and under, the Living Stage spends about 2½ hours with them. They spend 3½ hours with youngsters 12 and older, and they may spend the entire day or several days with adult or prison audiences.

Inevitably, at least one member in the audience blossoms—the reluctant kid in the back, the shy prisoner who says he can't think of something to be proud of, the cynical woman whose eight children have placed her in a nursing home.

"I've got a lot of miracle stories," said Alexander. "There was a 14-year-old blind girl who spoke for the first time during an improvisation. She was acting out being in a cab, going to a hotel to see someone's paintings and suddenly she yelled, 'See all those keys?' staring towards imaginary keys. 'I have to get them, those are the keys to my heart.'"

POETRY LIKE THIS and dreams brought to life on stage are what keep Alexander and his company going six days of the week. This is what activist theater is, "audiences are moved to action as artists. If they don't have the power to change reality, they at least emerge from theater moved.

"The mind once expanded never returns to its original position. It is not like a rubber band."

You're On!

Handicapped Youth Rehearse for Life

By Sandra R. Gregg
Washington Post Staff Writer

Kaia Calhoun of Living Stage works with Eric Sims at Sharpe Health School in improvisational theater.

Everyone was in a Yes mood that Wednesday until a mysterious leprechaun let a No get loose in the room. It was then discovered that indeed, a No was stuck in every mouth. So a quick trip was arranged to the Land of AAchoo to sneeze the culprits out. Two very stubborn Nos remained in Katrina Coghill and Michelle Dove, so Bobetta Ricks doctored their throats.

The Land of AAchoo is filled with the mundane matters of life, such as runny noses, funny hats and snaggle teeth. But there are unusual items, too, such as miniature wheel chairs and metal braces, but these can be made to disappear in this land of imagination.

The Land of AAchoo is the creation of 14 orthopedically handicapped 4- to 7-year-olds at the Sharpe Health School in upper Northwest. For the past three years, these children have been working with the acting crew of Living Stage, the 15-year-old community outreach branch of Arena Stage. The energetic nine-member troupe has enabled these children to push aside their walkers and protective helmets and give up their introversion to create a world where nothing is a barrier.

It has been said that play is children's work, and indeed, on Wednesday mornings these children go about the serious business of learning to think for themselves and build self-esteem through their play.

"Are we all beautiful?" asks Rebecca Rice, associate director of the troupe. "Yes," the children shout back.

Many of the handicapped children entering the class don't respond to speech or touch, says Wendy Haynes, Living Stage's coordinator for the project. But she says that in a matter of weeks or months they learn to behave more like normal children, an asset that carries over into the classroom, their teachers report.

Rice explains that these children — with handicaps caused by diseases such as spina bifida and cerebral palsy, often accompanied by speech and hearing problems — "are always reminded of what they can't do. We want to show them possibilities they never knew existed . . . to allow them to begin loving their bodies . . . (and) to sense there is no one who isn't valuable in the world."

And so Rice and company go about helping the children create skits about their lives and compose their own songs. As the session picks up momentum, some of the children slide out of their wheelchairs and crawl freely about the room.

The group was revisited recently by one of the children's favorite people, Henry Holden, an actor from New York City who is also a clown and acrobat. Holden had polio as a child and still uses crutches. One also might have thought him part magician after he enticed Marc Johnson — who looked like a miniature man in glasses and a navy sports jacket — into a lively jig, crutches and all.

He's special, says Haynes, because "he is a positive role model for the children," many of whom cannot imagine themselves as adults and may never have seen a handicapped adult.

The troupe's work with the Sharpe children is a pilot project that has been sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education for the last three years. This year's $133,000 grant pays salaries, transportation and equipment for workshops in other cities, at which troupe members explain how improvisational theater can help handicapped children.

Living Stage's talents are amazingly adaptable. The performers also work with Lorton Reformatory inmates and prisoners at the D.C. jail.

Triumphs of Living Stage at Sharpe Health and another school in Fairfax, Va., may come to an end when the government grant runs out at the end of the year. Haynes is trying to find new funding through private companies and foundations. But she says, "We're worried, we're in trouble."

Photos by Gary A. Cameron—The Washington Post

Oren Sandel of Living Stage with Nichole Blackwell at Sharpe Health School during a class exercise.

THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL Sunday, January 25, 1981

He helps find rainbows

By JACKIE LOOHAUIS
Special to The Journal

HOW CAN a child in a body brace chase a rainbow? How can a man in prison catch one?

Robert Alexander, the director of the improvisational Living Stage, is an actor obsessed with helping people latch on to what he calls their "own artistic rainbows." For more than a decade, he has worked with handicapped and incarcerated children and adults, urging them to "create their own worlds" through theater.

Alexander will be bringing his troupe, the outreach company of Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage Theater, to Milwaukee for the first time the week of Feb. 8. Under the auspices of Artreach, Living Stage will hold a three-day training session for artists and social service workers at Goodwill Industries, and then go to Ethan Allen School in Wales for a two-day session.

Improvise situations

Company members go into schools and institutions and improvise acting situations in which "the audience becomes the artists," said Alexander.

Typically, an actor in the troupe will ask the audience "for a word that talks about things most important to them," he said. "Say the theme is 'friendship.' We all get together, improvise scenes, and then bring it to a heightened moment and freeze the action. Then we ask, 'How would you love, love, love, with all your hearts to see it end?' It gives them a chance for once to create their own happy endings."

Within these fantasy moments, a wheelchair-bound youngster may act out the role of a hero rescuing a drowning victim, and a 70-year-old nursing home resident may relive what it was like to be a teenager.

"We work with people with obvious disabilities," said Alexander. "But regardless of the state of their bodies, their hearts and minds are in terrific shape. The handicap that they have is the way the rest of the world treats them.

"What starts to happen, one begins to discover other people's creativity. A little seed is planted. So their sense of dignity and hope and courage is enlarged. We want them to give themselves a pat on the back."

By his own admission, Alexander, 51, is "married" to his work with Living Stage, calling it a love affair between the company and the audience. He began work in theater more than 30 years ago, and started the Living Stage in Boston.

"We've been around and grown because we're lucky," he said, "and more importantly, it's my baby. I hire people who are turned on to these concepts. I'm the papa."

And a proud father at that. Alexander told a long series of success stories in helping people reach their own particular rainbows.

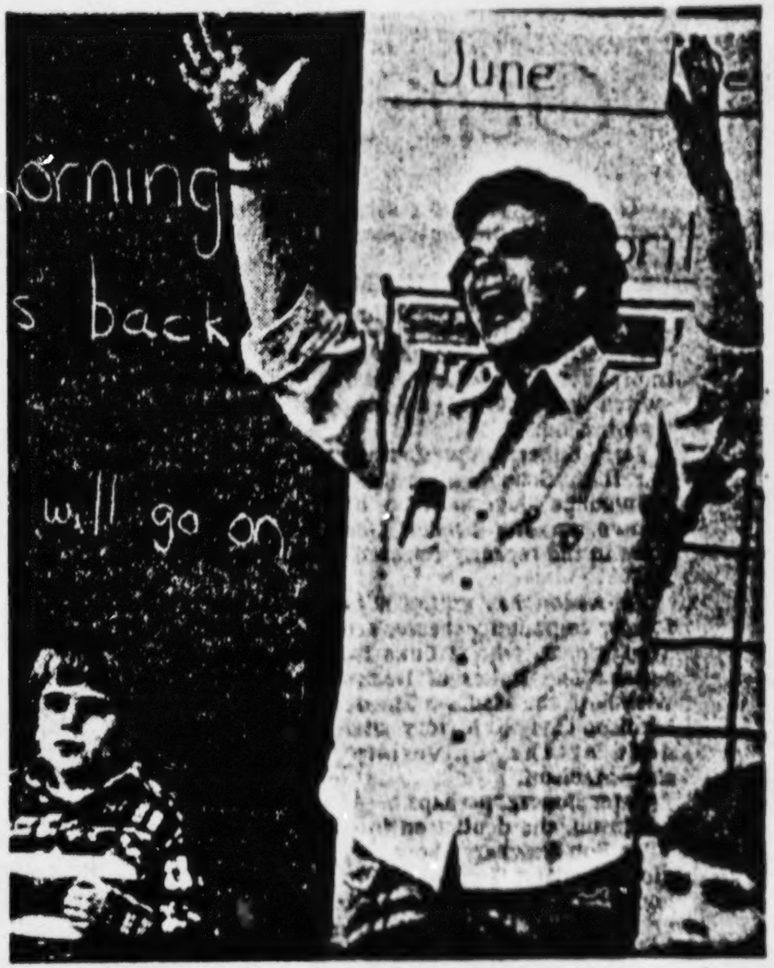
An imaginary cab

"There was a 14-year-old blind girl that one of the actors started working with. At one point, he suggested that they take a ride in an imaginary cab. Suddenly, she shouted, 'Stop the cab. Do you see the keys lying on the sidewalk? Those are the keys to my heart.'

"We didn't know it then, but those were the first words that girl had spoken in seven years."

Alexander will be training instructors in Milwaukee to carry out the improvisational techniques he's developed after the troupe leaves. Area actors will supplement the company while it's here, to bring a more local slant to its work.

"I'd like to see more of my brother and sister actors working one on one with members of the community. Theater can articulate the needs of a community and the nation," Alexander said.



Director Robert Alexander led a song about "All the Terrific Things We Are," with a group of disabled 5- to 7-year-olds.

MILWAUKEE SENTINEL

Friday, February 13, 1981

Living Stage appeals to the imagination

ONE OF THE NATION'S most imaginative theater groups will be in Milwaukee Saturday. But if the public doesn't get to the University of Wisconisn — Milwaukee's Union Art Gallery for the 6:30 p.m. show, the group will leave the city virtually unseen.

Catering to the public is not what interests Robert Alexander and his Living Stage company.

For 15 years Alexander has devoted his life to reaching the handicapped and the incarcerated with the liberating imagination of the theater.

The appearance is sponsored by Artreach Milwaukee in cooperation with the Wisconsin Coalition for the Arts and Human Needs. Funding is via grants from the Cudahy Fund and the Uhrig Foundation.

Alexander spent 19 years on the professional stage before he organized a small multiracial company of improvisational actors and musicians in 1965 to develop Alexander's theory of audience participation.

The basis of the theory is the concept that all human beings are artists. In exploring together, the actors and the audience discover the shape and meaning of experiences and events common to all people.

The audience members then are asked to live their answers to the problems posed. Resulting performances take on unusual shapes, unique to the Living Stage experience.

SINCE 1972, ALEXANDER and his company have created a language of non-verbal sounds in order that the audience members might express a greater range of emotions.

Each of these sounds is a statement of a particular emotion.

In combination with the company's ritualistic sequence of non-utilitarian movements the special language forms a rich chorus that both physically and vocally reveals the human predicament.

The Saturday performance is at the UWM Union Art Gallery, 2200 E. Kenwood Blvd., 1st Floor. Admission is $2. For reservations call 963-4825.

— JAY JOSLYN

ALL ABOUT
ARTREACH

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 4
THE NEWSLETTER OF ARTREACH MILWAUKEE
WINTER, 1980-1981

The Living Stage: first Milwaukee visit set for February 8–13, 1981

One of America's most unique theatre companies is coming to Milwaukee. Under the auspices of ARTREACH, the Living Stage will be making its first visit to our area during the week of February 8th.

As the outreach company of Washington D.C.'s Arena Stage, the Living Stage has devoted the past ten years to working with handicapped and institutionalized children and adults. The troupe was founded by Robert Alexander, considered one of the most imaginative figures in American theatre today.

"We work with the forgotten people of America," said Alexander. "Regardless of the shape they're in, their hearts and minds are capable of expressing even the deepest feelings.

"The people in our workshops do things they don't usually have the chance to do. We help them feel like full human beings."

The Living Stage has presented workshops and special programs throughout the United States. Their week in Milwaukee will include demonstration programs with children and adults, training workshops for artists and agency staff, and a special preview reception.

Funding for the Living Stage's Milwaukee residency has been granted to ARTREACH by the Uhrig Foundation and the Cudahy Fund. Arrangements are being made in cooperation with the Wisconsin Coalition for the Arts & Human Needs (WisCAHN).

For all who will be touched by the Living Stage during their visit to Milwaukee, the week of February 8th promises to be special indeed.

The Living Stage

ARTREACH selected by Ad Club

ARTREACH Milwaukee has been chosen as the 1980-81 public service project of Advertising Club II, Milwaukee. Comprised of young professionals in advertising and public relations, the club will work on a variety of projects designed to increase public awareness of ARTREACH programs.

The group's Public Service Chairman, Ellie Pykett, believes there is a good foundation upon which to build. "ARTREACH is one of the most organized non-profit groups we have ever worked with. The organization has a good concept of where it wants to go, who it wants to reach and how it needs to do it. That definitely makes it easier for us."

During the past several years, the club has worked with the Milwaukee County Zoo, Wisconsin Humane Society and the YMCA. Among other activities, club members will help to promote the Celebration of Arts and ARTREACH's fifth anniversary, as well as design a new information brochure.

Ellie Pykett concluded, "ARTREACH needs more money for more programs. By putting them in the public eye, we can help ARTREACH continue its important work."

"Those ARTREACH people who get tickets for us are wonderful. We're really grateful to them."

ARTREACHING IN COMMUNITY

A dream come true at the PAC

As the musicians tuned their instruments and the huge chandelier lights of Uihlein Hall flickered on and off, Jennie Balistreri and Frances Braun of River Park Apartments exchanged excited whispers. Smiles covered their faces as they watched the lights dim and billowy red curtains rise to reveal a Spanish setting.

Thanks to the Florentine Opera Company's donation of more than fifty tickets to ARTREACH Milwaukee, the afternoon of October 19th was a dream come true for Jennie and Frances, who sighed in approval when *Carmen* began.

"I've waited years to see this," said Jennie, recalling a trip to Spain many years ago.

In addition to the elderly women from River Park, the ARTREACH audience this fall Sunday included people undergoing treatment for alcoholism and mental illness, as well as residents of a correctional pre-release center. For most, this was their first visit to the PAC.

Healthy rounds of applause followed each song. At the end, Frances beamed, "Those ARTREACH people who get tickets for us are wonderful. We're really grateful to them... we just loved the show!"

As Frances and Jennie lingered at the exit an extra moment to savor their dream come true, murmurs of "beautiful, just beautiful" could be heard coming from more than one pair of lips.

The Florentine Opera's Carmen

VOLUNTEER CORNER

ARTREACH Milwaukee has two groups of volunteers. In addition to those who work directly with the people served by ARTREACH, the Board of Directors has been equally important to the success of the organization. And one of its most active members is **Gen Schauer.**

Since joining the ARTREACH Board in 1978, Gen has lent her sunny disposition and organizational talents to each of the three ARTREACHER campaigns and the past two annual meetings. She serves on the Planning & Development Committee, and is the Board's Secretary.

A native of Baraboo and graduate of the University of Wisconsin—Madison, Gen is the mother of five, three of whom still live at home in Brookfield. Keeping up with the teenagers' activities and participating in her husband's travels for Rexnord add to Gen's busy schedule.

While also finding time to assist the Meals on Wheels program at Elmbrook Hospital, Gen is in her ninth year as a volunteer at Brookfield Central High School. She is a founding member of the American Association of University Women's West Suburban branch.

"Before ARTREACH was formed, I never knew much about disabled persons," said Gen. Because she believes many people could make this statement, Gen feels an important role for Board members is encouraging public awareness.

"It's important for the public to know about ARTREACH. It's good for people to see that handicapped and elderly persons enjoy the arts as much as anyone."

artreach
milwaukee

Buddy Montgomery at DePaul Hospital

ARTREACHING

IN FACILITY

Have to believe in magic

The visitor's lounge at DePaul Hospital was cheerfully decorated on the evening of October 29th. Seated at the small red and chrome tables, patients and staff talked softly in anticipation of the ARTREACH-sponsored program they had left their rooms to see. Before long, the Buddy Montgomery Trio arrived and set up.

Presto. Montgomery's dazzling virtuosity recreated the intimate atmosphere of a small jazz club. His brilliant improvisations transformed the upright piano into an instrument of magic.

Fingers tapped and feet kept the beat as more than fifty people enjoyed a range of music and moods — from the Latin rhythms of *The Look of Love* to a mellow *Misty* to a medley of brother Wes's most memorable tunes.

More people wandered into the lounge, irresistibly drawn by the music. They, too, stayed to listen, standing in the back when there were no more chairs to be had.

"This is the best entertainment we've ever had at DePaul," said one patient. Carol Smith, a member of the activities staff commented, "The program was terrific. We'd love to have them back."

FROM THE DIRECTOR

If you notice ARTREACH Milwaukee on the move during the next several weeks, you can thank Security Savings & Loan and the Milwaukee County Transit System. Their contributions have made it possible for fifty County buses to carry our annual fund-raising message from the edges of Lake Michigan to the highlands of Wauwatosa.

Especially gratifying this time of year are the number of organizations helping to enhance public awareness of ARTREACH and our *Let Your Heart Reach* campaign. WTMJ produced the television spot which is being shown by all of Milwaukee's commercial stations. Wisconsin Electric Co., the Marine Bank, First Bank Milwaukee, Koss Corp., City Hall and the Pfister Hotel have each made space on their signs available to us. Perhaps most heartening of all, many of the agencies served by ARTREACH have assisted with the arduous task of stuffing, sorting and sealing several thousand pieces of mail. Thanks to all of you!

Everyone at ARTREACH is excited about the Living Stage's forthcoming visit to Milwaukee. If you would like information about any of the planned activities, feel free to contact the ARTREACH office.

And looking ahead to the spring, planning for the 1981 Celebration of Arts is proceeding smoothly. With more than a dozen organizations cosponsoring the festival, activities will take place April 30, May 1 and 2, with the opening day's events at the Milwaukee Art Museum and War Memorial.

From all of us at ARTREACH, best wishes for a happy holiday season and coming year filled with joy.

Paul Sturm

Paul Sturm
Executive Director

"I've met people tonight who care about life."

ARTREACHING
IN SPECIAL WAYS

Artists take their turn

"What's important is not theatre—but life—theatre is a response to life."
—Mike Moynihan

On the evening of November 23rd, Milwaukee performing and visual artists, along with members of the ARTREACH staff, spent nearly three hours reflecting on the challenges of working with handicapped, institutionalized and elderly audiences. The occasion was ARTREACH Milwaukee's first artists' workshop, held at Century Hall on Milwaukee's east side.

After Executive Director Paul Sturm spoke of the "inspiration and encouragement" the artists had given him, Melanie Panush, Edee Dissmore and Jerry Johnson presented samples of successful ARTREACH programs. Then, in small discussion groups, the artists talked of their responses to situations ranging from announcements over loud speakers to severe physical disabilities to total silence.

"I've been in situations where my goals have changed on the spot," said dancer Cate Deicher. "I've learned that people are people. If they want to hear, they will. If not, you don't take it personally."

The discussion was lively at ARTREACH Milwaukee's first artists' workshop.

Several artists spoke warmly of the hugs and kisses they receive at the end of their performances. Many reported staff members expressing amazement at how involved their normally docile patients become in the ARTREACH workshops.

Although time passed too quickly, the evening ended with a sing-along led by Wilde Mountain Thyme and a special feeling of comraderie. Mike Moynihan, co-director of Friends Mime Theatre, summed up the workshop by remarking, "I've met people tonight who care about life. It was helpful for us to hear each other."

ARTREACH Milwaukee *brings handicapped, institutionalized and elderly people to the arts—and takes the arts to them. Since the spring of 1976, our programs have brightened the lives of more than 90,000 people.*

MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE

Since we last told you All About ARTREACH, **funding** for our programs has been received from:

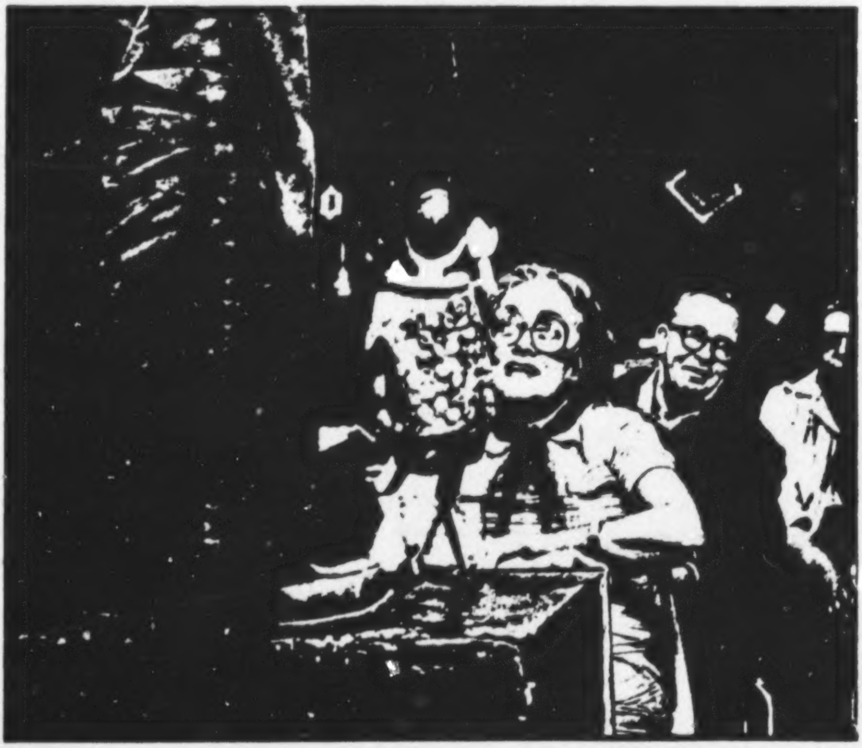
Allen-Bradley Foundation
American Medical Services
Arts Development Council
Carmelite Home for Boys
Patrick & Anna M. Cudahy Fund
Curative Rehabilitation Center
Godfrey Company/Sentry Foods
Grootemaat Foundation
Grunau Foundation
Daniel Hoan Foundation
Lakeside Child & Family Center
Methodist Manor
Milwaukee Psychiatric Hospital
Security Savings & Loan
Twentieth Century Topic Club
Edward A. Uhrig Foundation
United Methodist Women
Volunteers of America
Wisconsin Centrifugal Foundation
Wisconsin Correctional Service
Wisconsin Division of Corrections
and the ARTREACHERS

New Ticket Donors include:

Metropole Theater
Milwaukee Religious Drama Guild
Sinfonia Concertante

We are grateful to all whose support and contributions enable our work to continue and grow.

ROBIN REED'S
WONDERFUL WORLD OF PUPPETS



Robin Reed (shown above) brought his *Wonderful World of Puppets* to the John F. McMahon Center on November 11. The program was part of ARTREACH Milwaukee's landmark study *Cultural Enrichment & Evaluation for the Mentally Ill.*

CALENDAR

FALL 1980

OCTOBER

Thursday 2	Marcel Marceau: The Art of Pantomime (5:00-10:00)
Tuesday 7	The Performing Arts Library: An Introduction (4:30-6:30)
Saturday 11	The Creative Life: A Workshop in Creative Expression (9:00-1:00)
Thursday 16	Performing Arts II: Film (**The Last Tycoon**) (5:00-10:00)
Sunday 19	Performing Arts II: Film (**The Misfits**) (5:00-10:00)
Tuesday 28	Performing Arts II: Film (**Model**) (6:00-11:00)
Thursday 30	Performing Arts I: Drama **Sweeney Todd** (5:00-10:30)

NOVEMBER

Thursday 6	Performing Arts I: Visual Arts (Torpedo Factory Art Center) (6:00-10:00)
Saturday 8	Poetry/Drama in the Classroom (10:00-2:00)
Monday 10	Hartford Stage Company --**A Clear and Present Danger** (4:30-6:30)
Tuesday 11	Performing Arts I: Music (National Symphony Orchestra) (5:00-10:30)
Wednesday 19	The Winter Consort: Performance and Workshop (4:30-8:30)

elem guish a documentary film from a narrative feature ollows the men odels at one of New York City's leading model agen their daily work in photographers' studios, department stores, fashion shows and TV commercials. In addition, the producer/director, Frederick Wiseman will discuss his work with the film audience after the showing.

Participants must register for all three sessions. Ticket fee: $12.00. Registration deadline: October 2.
***Includes estimated performance time.**

MORE WORKSHOPS!

Marcel Marceau: The Art of Pantomime

Thursday, October 2, 5:00–10:00 PM

This workshop and performance will focus on the most ancient art, the art of pantomime. The workshop will be conducted by Lynn Brice Rooney, teacher, choreographer/director, who has taught mime/movement/improvisation throughout the metropolitan area. Through demonstration and participation, Ms. Rooney will guide participants to an understanding of the art of pantomime, its basic techniques and styles, and its use and importance in the theater arts as well as in the classroom.

Following the workshop, participants will attend a performance by Marcel Marceau, who has been called the WORDLESS WONDER, the WORLD'S GREATEST PANTOMIMIST, the GENIUS OF GESTURE. World renowned for his interpretations of the comic and tragic aspects of our daily existence, Marcel Marceau creates, with a few gestures, the joys of our childhood, the misfortunes and agonies of our lives.

Fee: $15.00. Registration deadline: September 22.

The Performing Arts Library: An Introduction

Tuesday, October 7, 4:30–6:30 PM

The Performing Arts Library, a joint project of the Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress, will host a workshop session on library resources in theater, music, dance, film and broadcasting. The session will focus on the particular resources for teachers, school librarians and resource persons that are in the collections of the Library of Congress, including books, periodicals, tapes, recordings, videotapes and microfilms. A special feature of the session will be the work actually being done in the Performing Arts Library.

The Creative Life: The Workshop in Creative Expression

Saturday, October 11, 9:00–1:00 PM

This special session is designed for educators working with students with handicapping conditions.

This workshop will ACTIVELY encourage people to live out of their creative juices, rather than their everyday personalities. In order to recognize the genius and beauty in others, we must first become reverent of our own creative souls. In this workshop, Robert Alexander, director of Living Stage, will lead participants in using the instrument of the theater-worker—body, voice, mind, heart and soul—to create an environment where people can express and communicate their deepest feelings. Improvisational theatre techniques will be used and people will be asked to get in touch with their heart-beats, their guts, and together create wondrous, magnificent works of art—and through the creation expand our awareness and raise our consciousness about how we live our lives and what the real physical, emotional and intellectual meaning of the words education, learning, caring, trust, knowledge, encouragement, passion and integrity mean.

Robert Alexander is the creator and director of Living Stage, the outreach program of Washington's Arena Stage. Living Stage, a theatre company dedicated to turning on its audience to their own creativity, has won much acclaim from educators and teachers involved in work with the handicapped.

Enrollment limited to 16.

Poetry/Drama in the Classroom

Saturday, November 8, 10:00–2:00 PM

Dr. John C. Carr, professor, at the University of Maryland and Catholic University, will conduct a four-hour workshop focusing on the theme of poetry as exploration of the human condition. Designed for elementary and secondary school teachers, the session will have three components: 1) teaching poetry through the inquiry-discovery technique; 2) motivating and guiding students in the writing of poetry; 3) exploring "instant theatre" techniques for sharing ideas and feelings about poetry. (Students from the High School Drama Institute, Catholic University, will present a reader's theater production of poetry and discuss their work with participants.)

NOTE: Summer Institute in the Arts and Aesthetic Education

There will be two special workshop sessions offered this Fall for all participants who attended the 1980 Summer Institute. Information regarding the date and time of the workshops will be mailed to participants in September. These workshops are a continuation of the Secondary School Arts Education Project and the CEMREL, Inc. Aesthetic Education Project for elementary schools begun this summer with teachers and administrators from 13 area schools. Participants in this ongoing project are encouraged to also attend the workshops presented during the regular Fall series of Art Education Workshops. For further information about the Summer Institute contact R. Virginia Rogers or Lynne Silverstein at (202) 254-7190.

PLEASE CLIP AND RETURN

The mailing list for the Arts Education Workshops is now being revised. If you would like to continue receiving the Arts Education Workshops brochure, please fill in or

Name ____________________

Address

The Alexandria Gazette

Wed., May 28, 1980

Nothing Conventional Here

Living Stage Teaches Creativity

By DOROTHEA S. MICHELMAN
Special To On The Town

Happy sounds of music and songs of welcome fill to overflowing the "Old Vat Room" of Arena Stage in Southwest Washington.

About a dozen two- to four-year-old youngsters enthusiastically join the musical "jam" as they select sets of bells, tambourines, or maracas from a suitcase opened on a big rug. At this moment the youngsters have become part of "Living Stage" — what its creator calls the most unusual, improvisational theater experience in the world.

At the entrance to a pretend teepee, a young "Indian squaw," at right, a pupil from Amazing Life Games School in Washington, explains her daily chores to Living Stage actress Rebecca Rice. Above, pupils from the school join in a musical "jam" with Mark Novak of the Living Stage troupe.

Under the bold direction of creator and leader Robert Alexander and his dedicated, talented and so-energetic troupe of six — Rebecca, Jennifer, Oran, Roberta, Andrea and Mark — this unique theater, a venture of Arena Stage, knows no conventional costumes, lighting, scripts, or staging.

The "stage" can be any convenient setting. A few brightly colored benches and boxes serve the imagination as props, now representing one thing, then another. Similarly, actors and audience — in effect, one and the same for Living Stage — also transform their individual roles as the action evolves in natural response to changing themes and the creative impulse.

Alexander, in theater for the past 30 years, used to offer children traditional classics — Moliere and Shakespeare, for example — and then invited them to offer their own variations of these performances. Some 15 years ago, however, he felt that through their own "playwrighting" the youngsters would be able to use their creative abilities best. Living Stage's "Open Play — Environment" concept gives this creativity an opportunity for full expression.

One morning, the workshop-performance involved a lively mix of music and games; a series of tableaux, human sculptures depicting strong feelings such as joy and anger, against an appropriate musical background; and, as a culmination, the child-created "Indian Village," in which all participants role-played their own interpretations of Indians, settlers, animals, fishermen and hunters.

Many schools in this area provide the setting for Living Stage workshops. Some, such as George Mason in Alexandria, participate on a single-time basis. Others have regular workshop-performances — for example, the weekly sessions at two schools for the handicapped, Fairhill Elementary School in Fairfax and Sharpe Health in Washington.

The sight of handicapped, yet totally involved and enchanted children, most of them in wheelchairs, proves a particularly moving experience. They sing, they play music, they act out various parts, some even dance — as best they can.

Explains Alexander: "We want to teach them that a disabled body is equally capable of creativity. Their intelligence and creative energies are just as great as anybody's. The only handicap these children have is our attitude toward them."

"What is your greatest satisfaction?" Alexander was asked.

"When through this work," he replied, "a human being discovers, or rediscovers, or gets in touch with his own artistic, creative source, and he becomes conscious of it. And through that he regains his self-confidence. And we see this happen right before our eyes. That's the greatest saisfaction."

WHO'S WHO FROM NEIGHBORHOOD ARTS

"Movers and shakers" from the Neighborhood Arts Field who make programs happen...

"The poem, the song, the picture, is only water drawn from the well of the people and it should be given back to them in a cup of beauty so that they may drink and in drinking understand themselves."

ALEXANDER

This quote from the Spanish artist F.G. Lorca sums up **Robert Alexander's** feelings toward art. In a lifetime of being an artist, Alexander has devoted nearly half of that time to working with children and adults in the theatre world. His career has spanned several media including theatre, film and television. In 1964, he became the artist director of New York's Children's Performing Arts Guild Inc. Later he became artist director of the Children's Theatre Program of the Charles Playhouse where he created a program called Living Stage to Washington, D.C. audiences in 1966.

The only professional troupe of it's kind in the U.S., Living Stage believes that there should be a strong union between art, the artist, and the audience. Reasons for the success of living stage are the utilization of neighborhood space as a stage and the close interaction between the company and the audience.

gap
VOL. 2/NO. 2
a publication of
arts media service

Stage is another world for disabled children

THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL

Sunday, March 2, 1980

By Steve Burkholder

Special to The Journal

Madison, Wis. — The children arrive in wheelchairs, some in leg braces or on crutches. Others walk with difficulty, but they walk.

They sit as a group and watch the actors before them sway and move to the fluid rhythms of an electric piano. Then as the young men and women, black and white, begin a song, the kids join in.

The children are shy at first, and sing in low voices, but the actors urge them on and they become bolder, more exuberant. They begin to dance to the music in their own way.

As the two groups, now one, warm up with singing and making musical noises — "jamming in a jazz way," says one — two actors break away and go into a skit.

It's a simple story of an older woman not wanting to care for the garden that used to provide her with food. A young man practically begs her to take care of the plants, but she stubbornly refuses.

Suddenly a man offstage yells "Freeze!" The actors stop, motionless.

"How do you want the scene to end?" Rebecca Rice, a leader of the troupe, asks her young audience.

She invites the audience — physically disabled children, six, seven and eight-year-olds — to be the characters who act out the plot line that they themselves make up.

The kids happily volunteer. As the improvised play unfolds, their eyes get brighter. Their faces light up as they lose themselves in the story.

Minutes later, the little drama comes to a happy end and spontaneous hugging between actor and child breaks out all around.

Virginia location

The setting is Fairhill Center, a school for disabled children in Fairfax, Va. The actors make up the Living Stage theater company, for several years the community outreach program of the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C.

News of the Living Stage idea of education and therapy through improvisational theater came to Madison last week when representatives of the company spoke before an interested group at the State Department of Health and Social Services.

Those who took in the Living Stage presentation included persons from county and state social service agencies, arts groups and a senior citizen organization

May come to state

Favorably impressed with a film showing the method, officials are investigating the possibility of bringing the theater learning experience to Wisconsin.

There is already talk of a workshop coming to selected area cities to teach the improvisational method later this year.

"We're encouraged to look at Wisconsin as fertile ground," said Martha Vinograd, the troupe's chief fund-raiser. "We'd like to carry it to Milwaukee where there's active theater and some interest in what it can do for people."

What theater can do for people is the key to the Living Stage's concept of learning.

The forgotten ones

The Living Stage is the brainchild of Bob Alexander, an enthusiastic director and organizer with Arena Stage. Alexander emphasizes the life-sustaining creativity and self-initiative that the productions seek to promote in people he calls "the forgotten ones" — senior citizens, prison inmates, runaways and physically disabled children.

"We need to let them know that their feelings and thoughts are important to us," Alexander says in the film titled, "And Always There's a Rainbow . . . ."

"Within you always, always there's a rainbow," he says, explaining the title. Dreams and hopes, says Alexander, are the first step twoard breaking out of the limitations that are placed on these people.

"Demand the impossible. Be realistic. But first, the dreams," he concludes.

Regular visits

Alexander and the theater troupe have taken that message to several schools and institutions in the Wash-

world's a stage for handicapped but aspiring young actors

ington area. The Living Stage makes regular visits to high schools, a federal penitentiary, women inmates and senior citizens' homes.

Since 1977 they have been working with disabled children, most recently under a grant from the US Office of Education of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Different themes, relevant to the lives of each audience, are the focus of the theater performances.

Play has a goal

A major goal of each performance is giving the audiences practice in what might be called moral, or positive, decision making. The practice comes almost unconsciously, through the medium of the play.

Making choices are most important with the so-called handicapped children.

"Handicapped. We ought to strike that term from our hearts," admonishes Alexander. "The only handicap they have is our attitude toward them."

Compensation made

Being able to make decisions is a way to compensate for the imposed negative attitude, say representatives of the Living Stage.

Wendy Haynes, Living Stage coordinator, adds that the preskit warming-up period, or "ritual of sounds," has a great impact on a child's self-concept and self-respect.

She stresses the importance of "learning to use the body to express your deepest feelings."

Stretching their potential

Ms. Vinograd adds that the movement and singing is play for the kids "who really don't play the same way that other kids do.

"They stretch their potentials. And they move their bodies in ways they thought they never could," she said.

Open play, in which the children pick an age, a sex, and a task, is the largest part of the Living Stage's sessions at Fairhill Center.

For many kids, making these decisions is a new experience. They take to it quickly, thanks to the sensitivity and good humor of the young, multiracial acting troupe.

RAINBOWS

The National Committee ☆ Arts for the Handicapped
An educational affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
1701 K Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

MAY/JUNE 1979

Coming Alive With LIVING STAGE

They come with crates of colorful costumes . . . melodies and maracas . . . dramatic flair . . . energy and enthusiasm. They come trained and prepared with a repertoire of 80 songs and 450 poetry and prose passages and seven years of experience working with handicapped children. They are the members of LIVING STAGE.

Created in 1965 by Robert Alexander as the outreach educational program of Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage, LIVING STAGE is a small, multiracial improvisational theatre company "dedicated to turning on its audiences to their own creativity." Initially, it brought the theatrical experience to minority children and teenagers in inner-city Washington. Today, its audiences include prison inmates, elderly persons, and handicapped children, as well. The company performs in metropolitan Washington and across the country at colleges, universities, museums, libraries, and schools.

LIVING STAGE was selected from 400 applicants to receive a one-year (1977-78) grant from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U.S. Office of Education to conduct a demonstration program of theatrical workshops for physically disabled children in Fairfax, Virginia. Highly successful, the project was refunded for three years. Work continues at Fairhill Center School in Fairfax and extends to Sharpe Health School in the District.

Of the handicapped children, Mr. Alexander says: "We want to teach them that [a] disabled body is equally capable of creativity. Their intelligence and creative energies are just as great as anybody's." The actors are devoted to increasing each child's sense of self-worth, experience of joy, and ability to take control over behavior and decisions. They create theater with the children, teach them how to build characters, and help them express their feelings and ideas with body and voice.

The company often works in the middle of the audience, frequently encouraging the children to communicate feelings without using words. No judgment is passed . . . there are no wrong responses in improvisations. The atmosphere fosters success and risk-taking. There are no set themes, no scripts. Everything springs from the feelings, thoughts, and moods of the actors and audience, who become collaborators in shaping the theatrical experience. Exploration and discovery are critical processes.

Alexander and the company are also concerned that parents, teachers, and therapists become involved with and understand the children's experiences. Time is alloted for meeting with concerned adults following the sessions with the students.

LIVING STAGE will be on tour in May in Arizona to work with groups of deaf children, an effort sponsored by the Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

Inquiries should be addressed to: **Robert Alexander, Director, or Tess Steinkolk, Assistant to the Director, LIVING STAGE, 6th and Maine Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024 (202 554-9066).**

Photo by Tess Steinkolk

Assistant Artistic Director and Actress Rebecca Rice interacts with orthopedically disabled children in theatre games, which encourage creativity and increase muscular flexibility and coordination.

Photos by Tess Steinkolk

LIVING STAGE PROJECTS "I CAN" PHILOSOPHY

"Every child – disabled or not – has the potential for creative genius." This belief forms the philosophical basis of the Living Stage, an improvisational theater troupe dedicated to turning its audiences on to their own creativity.

For the past 12 years, the company, an outreach component of Washington, D.C's Arena Stage, has worked with the disabled, the elderly, juvenile delinquents and prisoners to awaken self-expression, communication and confidence. The national acclaim received from educators and others who work with disabled children, led to a 1977 Bureau for Education of the Handicapped (BEH) grant. The purpose of the 12 month grant was to demonstrate the troupe's capacity to work with handicapped children in Fairfax County, Virginia. The program was so successful that in October 1978, the company received funding for a 3-year project to develop a model for working with young multiply handicapped children (ages 3-8) at Sharpe Health School in Washington, D.C. and Fairhill School in McLean, Virginia.

Twice each week, for two and a half hours, the troupe conducts a workshop at each school to encourage self-expression and self-discovery among handicapped students at the school. The philosophy of the program is to use the troupe as a tool to promote a greater sense of self-worth and positive thinking.

The company consists of three actors/actresses, a musician, stagehands and the Director, Bob Alexander. There are no written scripts. However, members of the troupe have a repertoire of over 80 songs and 500 poems and phrase passages to deepen the content of the performance. In addition, the musician accompanies the dramatizations with an electric piano. He changes the style of the music according to the action flowing from each scene.

A participational rather than presentational format is used for each workshop. Each scene evolves from the emotions and thoughts of the actors. The program consists of four separate stages: (1) the jam; (2) a performance session; (3) warm-up exercises; and (4) the open play.

Even before the children enter the room, they can hear the sounds of music emitted from the workshop area. This "jamming" continues as the children arrive with troupe members playing congo drums, the electric piano and various percussion instruments. The environment pulsates with sounds and colors from the bright blue, red and yellow collapsible boxes used as props.

The children are drawn into a carpeted area where musical instruments are laid out for their use in the jam session. At this point the actors/actresses slowly draw each child into musical and verbal improvisations until everyone is participating.

Each child gets the opportunity to direct the sound and action from the rest of the group. He/she has control of the environment. The purpose is to live out one's true feelings – whether they express love, hate, loneliness, fear or joy.

According to Wendy Haynes, Project Coordinator, the process inspires "creative play." "Each child develops listening skills which lead to new and improved learning and communication skills." This motivates increased action and motor participation. Imagination and abstraction exercises are inherent in the process. A chain reaction is set off with the impact increasing motivation and learning capacity.

The final result is that the handicapped child looses consciousness of his or her disability and reaches a new creative environment where he/she feels confidence and greater self-esteem.

Further details are available by contacting: *Marty Vinograd, Program Development, Living Stage at Arena Stage, 6th and Maine Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024.*

The Washington Star
Metro .
SECTION C
* SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1978

'Now . . . I've Got Everything'

Living Stage Gives Handicapped Children Another World

By Thomas C. Fox
Washington Star Staff Writer

Seven-year-old *Mike* Shea, his *thin* body held erect in leather straps and metal braces from his feet to the middle of his chest, jolted across the room quickly.

Clutching his walking brace, Mike's shoulders worked to flip his small frame forward. He had no time to spare. It was an emergency and he was screaming:

"Hurry! Hurry! Father's in the pond! He's drowning!"

The other children, some in wheelchairs, responded.

Though disabled by a spinal defect called Spina Bifida, and though wrapped in bars, belts and straps, Mike couldn't care less. He was oblivious to his handicap. He was beyond it, in another world, one he had created.

He was confident. He would pull Father from the pond.

And to the cheers of all those around him, he did.

For 55 splendid minutes last week, in a small classroom at the Fairhill Elementary School in Fairfax County, Mike was play-acting.

His blond hair in a curly wig and covered by a crushed white sailor's cap, he was an actor — though he didn't quite know it. He was the son of a farmer, a young man in his 20s. He was strong. He milked cows, gathered eggs, planted vegetables in a garden, though, of course, he could not stoop.

Like good actors, as he played his role, the "real world" dissolved around him.

Mike and 13 other disabled children, ages 6 to 8, along with five actors and actresses from the Washington-based Living Stage, were playing out the roles of a warm and caring farm family, a family that included cousins, brothers and sisters, a horse, chicken, cow and even a rat.

BOB ALEXANDER
Director of Living Stage

The Living Stage is the outreach program of Washington's Arena Stage. It's a small, multi-racial improvisational theater company that has won much acclaim from educators and those involved in work with the handicapped.

"It's dedicated to turning on its audiences to their own creativity," says the company's creator and director, Bob Alexander.

At 49, Alexander is a short man with graying sideburns and the enthusiasm for life of a young puppy. He has been involved in theater for 30 years, and for the last 13 years has been evolving the mood, themes, rhythms and personality of Living Stage. In the end, it is his personal statement on life.

It is a positive, hopeful "we-can-all-love-each-other" statement.

"What's our purpose?" he responded to a visitor's question last week, shortly before beginning an afternoon session with a group of orthopedically handicapped children at Fairhill School. "Our purpose is to let them know they are delicious, rainbow, splendor people.

"The thrust of our work is to let them experience through their bodies, voices, minds and hearts that they are artists. Through the arts, they will gain a greater sense of self-worth," he said.

For years, Living Stage has been working with the outcasts of society, says Alexander. It has been taking the theater to the elderly, to those in prisons and to those in juvenile homes.

The troup began working with the handicapped in 1972. Last year, the U.S. Office of Education's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped selected the company from a field of 400 applicants to conduct a 12-month demonstration program, funding the company with an $82,000 grant.

That enabled the Living Stage staff to conduct workshops at Fairhill and Franklin Sherman School in McLean from October 1977 through May 1978.

Based on the success of these pilot projects, the Bureau of Education re-funded Living Stage for three more years to work with children at Fairhill and Sharpe Health School in Washington.

Last week at Fairhill, the five-member troupe began its three-hour session before the children entered the classroom. They were jamming, that is, singing and improvising verses to the rhythm and beat of an electric piano and conga drum.

The theme for the day was parents. And after about 20 minutes of free song, the troupe came up with a verse that they repeated throughout their session with the children:

"My mama gave me hope. My pappa gave me sing.
Now I've got all that I need. I've got everything."

Minutes later, as the troupe sang the verse softly, the children entered. Some were in wheel-

See LIVING STAGE, C-2

week, in a small classroom at the Fairhill Elementary School in Fairfax County, Mike was play-acting.

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Like good actors, as he played his role, the "real world" dissolved around him.

Mike and 13 other disabled children, ages 6 to 8, along with five actors and actresses from the Washington-based Living Stage, were playing out the roles of a warm and caring farm family, a family that included cousins, brothers and sisters, a horse, chicken, cow and even a rat.

The Living Stage is the outreach program of Washington's Arena Stage. It's a small, multi-racial improvisational theater company

BOB ALEXANDER
Director of Living Stage

that has won much acclaim from educators and those involved in work with the handicapped.

"It's dedicated to turning on its audiences to their own creativity," says the company's creator and director, Bob Alexander.

At 49, Alexander is a short man with graying sideburns and the enthusiasm for life of a young puppy. He has been involved in theater for 30 years, and for the last 13 years has been evolving the mood, themes, rhythms and personality of Living Stage. In the end, it is his personal statement on life.

It is a positive, hopeful "we-can-all-love-each-other" statement.

"What's our purpose?" he responded to a visitor's question last week, shortly before beginning an afternoon session with a group of orthopedically handicapped chil-

1977 through May 1978.

Based on the success of these pilot projects, the Bureau of Education re-funded Living Stage for three more years to work with children at Fairhill and Sharpe Health School in Washington.

Last week at Fairhill, the five-member troupe began its three-hour session before the children entered the classroom. They were jamming, that is, singing and improvising verses to the rhythm and beat of an electric piano and conga drum.

The theme for the day was parents. And after about 20 minutes of free song, the troupe came up with a verse that they repeated throughout their session with the children:

"My mama gave me hope. My pappa gave me sing.
Now I've got all that I need. I've got everything."

Minutes later, as the troupe sang the verse softly, the children entered. Some were in wheel-

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As his classmates look on (left), 6-year-old Glynn Mallory acts out a part with Living Stage troupe member Rebecca Rice. Tom Leany's wheelchair (above) sports a sign with a familiar sentiment, "I hate school, but I love lunch." Below, bewigged Mike Shea makes a point.

—Washington Star Photographer Bernie Boston

Living Stage

chairs, others on crutches, some limping from deformed limbs and others pulling themselves into the room on their knees. Each suffered a physical disability.

The Fairhill Elementary School has an orthopedic wing, and about 50 children attend the orthopedic program.

They entered timidly, uncertain, and soon took positions on the floor in front of the troupe. Bells and tambourines had been placed on the floor and without being told, the children soon reached for the music-makers to pick up the beat. They began to warm up, smile and laugh.

Soon troupe actress Rebecca Rice began to act out the part of a 6-year-old girl, who, rejected from a boys' baseball team, returned home crying.

"Freeze!" Alexander shouted from the side of the room where he had been busily taking notes. He stood up, and, facing the children, asked: "How do we want the story to end? Give us your ending."

The children responded, each with his own version and most happy ending.

Six-year-old Glynn Mallory volunteered to be Rebecca's father and lead her back to the ballpark, where she hit a home run to win the game. Glynn, wearing a police hat as a prop, was all smiles.

Wigs, shirts, hats, dresses and multi-colored cloths, along with large yellow and red crates were strewn about the classroom as props, and the children were encouraged to choose the ones they wanted to help create their characters. The troup encouraged the young children to take the roles of adults, to make decisions and supported those decisions no matter what they were.

The Living Stage also encouraged the children to express their feelings by talking with their faces without words and by using hands, shoulders and necks to make expressions. It encouraged the children to sing and dance and to express themselves in any way that felt good.

"Everything has been arranged to add support to their creativity," said Alexander as he moved about the classroom during the last 55 minutes of the troupe's performance — the "open play" time when the children were allowed to act out any role that they chose within a farm family.

Alexander's face was glowing, reflecting the emerging mood of the children who moved about in all directions talking to each other.

"The cow just stepped in the garden. Stop everything," Mike shouted out at one point. Rushing to a spot on the floor, where an imaginary vegetable garden had been created, the children began to replant food for the family.

Even the farm cow — 6-year-old Kim Leahy, in a wheelchair — helped.

As the afternoon session drew to an end, the children, huddled together, wrapped in multicolored clothes that enclosed them in an imaginary rocket ship, pretended they were flying to another planet.

As they flew their rocket ship, they sang love songs, including one by the Beatles, "All Together Now."

One, two, three, four. Can I have a little more?
Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. I love you.
A, B, C, D, Can I bring my friend to tea?
E, F, G, H, I love you.

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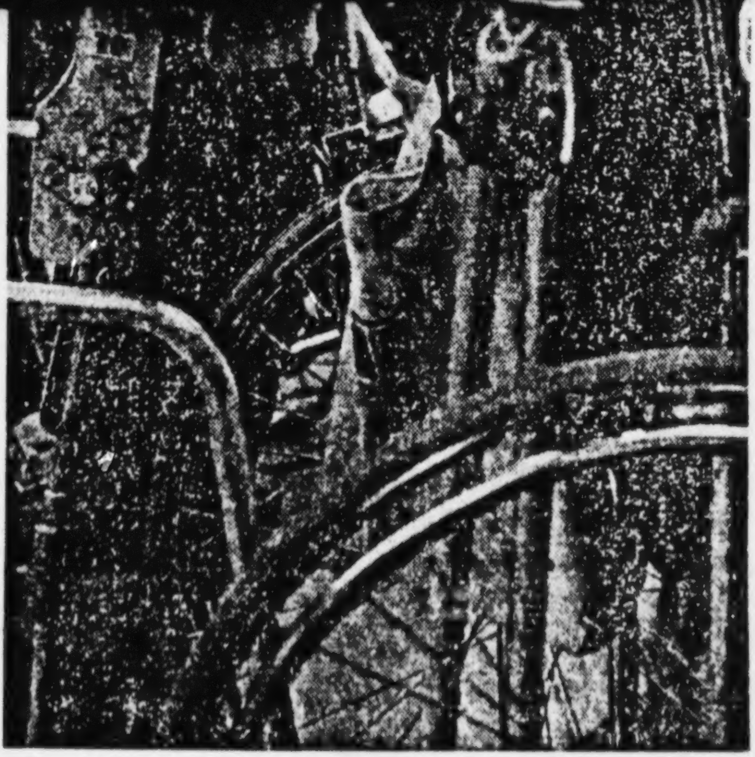
And there were tears in the eyes of many parents, who had been watching through a two-way mirror in an adjacent room, as they entered to take the youngsters back home.



is wrong with them. They need to feel in their spirit they are *not* disabled. They need to feel that their brains and hearts and souls are capable of great ideas."

Acknowledging on the one hand that he's something of a "romantic," he believes firmly that artists – theater artists in particular – hold the passkey to people's private, creative worlds. "We help the inarticulate to speak," according to the Living Stage brochure says. "We are here for them to discover their dreams."

The company's actors, who also perform regularly for prisoners and senior citizens, use no scripts. As their brochure puts it, "We play the way good jazz musicians play. Our plays are improvised on the melody of life that is already there in the audiences." They choose a theme, build the drama to a climax and freeze the action. The audience suggests the ending, and Living Stage performs as many endings as the audience gives them; their workshops are ongoing, and Living Stage has worked with some groups of children for as long as four years.

Alexander says the "miracle stories" he described, and other, similar experiences, have convinced him that theater can help to unlock the imaginations of his audiences. His associate Wendy Haynes noted that many parents have remarked that their children have become happier and more active as a result of the workshops. "Their eyes gleam with new respect for their children," she says.

Said Alexander: "My aim is to make sure the creative process is part of (the children's) daily lives, and to help them feel that their thoughts and feelings can make a positive contribution – that they are important people. If people don't feel they're important, they feel oppressed. They're miserable."

Boston's McMillion adds that the arts can also be a valuable tool for helping disabled people learn basic skills, like washing their faces and tying their shoes. Music, in particular, is an "attention-getting" device; singing a song about tying shoes "focuses their concentration . . . and makes it less of a task and more of an event."

Robert Alexander's goal is strictly artistic. Basic skills "don't concern me. I don't care if a child can tie his shoe if he's not a fulfilled person. You're not doing this to get him to read or write or tie his shoe, you're getting him to do it because he's an artist. He was born an artist. If you allow him to express himself, then all that other stuff will happen."

How can he be so sure?

"I have deep faith. I believe that birds were made to fly. Fish were made to swim. And humans were made to learn."

Alexander working with children with mild cerebral palsy.

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Their very special artistic abilities

By Linda Matchan
Globe Staff

"Miracle stories" Robert Alexander calls them, yet they are very real, and they show the creative genius of the 35 million people in this country who, he says, are "insidiously" labeled disabled.

Alexander is founder and director of the The Living Stage, a Washington, D.C., improvisational theater company whose members devote much of their time to work with physically disabled and mentally retarded children. He was in Boston this weekend to conduct a two-day workshop at Emerson College for local performers and educators, and he talked about some of the sobering experiences he has had with the handicapped.

He described an unhappy 14-year-old blind girl who spoke for the first time in seven years during one of his performances. The children in the audience were invited to make up an ending for a vignette that the actors had performed; one actor, who didn't know she didn't speak, invited her to ride in an imaginary taxi and tried to engage her in conversation.

"Stop the cab!" she yelled suddenly, breaking her long silence. Then, with a poignant sense of urgency, she told the actor: "The keys to my heart are lying on the sidewalk."

He spoke of a 10-year-old girl with severe cerebral palsy who was described by her teachers as a "vegetable" that wouldn't move. But she obliged the actors when they asked her to dance to a poem that one of them read aloud, stretching and bending and making a "perfect artistic" ending with one arm extended gracefully forward and one knee bent backward.

"There's stuff happening inside these people we don't know about," said Alexander, an animated, boyish-looking man of 52, a passionate man who says working with the handicapped is an "honor that affords an opportunity to grow, to learn, to be in a state of grace."

These people, he said, "have never been in an environment that nurtures their originality." Their imaginations are rarely stimulated by teachers and families. They are rarely perceived as creative, vibrant beings.

Cerebral palsy child is playing the mother comforting the son, actor Oran Sandel.

To the outside world, he feels, the handicap is the only trait that matters.

Though the Living Stage Theater was formed 15 years ago, his remarks and concerns are, perhaps, of particular significance in 1981, designated by the United Nations the International Year of Disabled Persons. Public attention is starting to focus on the abilities, rather than the disabilities, of people with physical and mental impairments, and there is a growing awareness that the arts can be an invaluable means of enriching the lives of disabled people.

In Boston, for example, the Massachusetts Department of Education and the Artists Foundation are today cosponsoring the state's fifth annual Very Special Arts Festival at John Hancock Hall. The event attracts hundreds of handicapped and nonhandicapped adults and children who will participate in 150 morning and afternoon dance, poetry and art workshops. Joan Kennedy is the featured speaker at a free performance tonight, starting at 7 p.m., by actors, dancers and musicians who happen to be disabled.

The festival is designed to "bring together the handicapped and nonhandicapped and focus on what the handicapped can do," said co-coordinator Patricia Mazza.

Many performers in the Boston area share these concerns, and efforts have been made recently to involve the disabled in theater projects, as well as other areas of the arts. Watertown's Urban Arts Project in Deafness, for example, formed in 1978, brings deaf and hearing teenagers together in a "work experience project," according to director Anne McDermott. They are taught an assortment of skills in the visual and performing arts, from movement and dance to set and costume design. "Part of what we're doing is building feelings of self-confidence," she said.

Encouraging disabled people to develop self-confidence is also part of the work of Boston's Next Move Theater, which has an active education and children's theater department. One of its projects is an art therapy program at the William Carter Developmental Day Care Center in Boston, a school for physically and mentally handicapped children. Members of the Next Move use music, visual arts, theater and dance therapy to "give the students an opportunity to experience the arts to enrich their daily lives," said education director Thalia McMillion. "It's as though they were left out (of the arts) because they respond differently – they don't jump up and clap their hands."

The Next Move's Shira Karman, who works at the Carter Center, says using arts with disabled people helps them feel they are understood and accepted. Rather than teach them formal songs, she listens to the sounds that the children create "and make *them* into music. They can experience the moment of being accepted. the joy of being understood and of being able to communicate."

In Alexander's opinion "the physically disabled can do everything we can. The only difference is that we have more access to the world than they do. But they feel something

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